



The Rev.^d Micaiah Towgood Etat 83.

Jas. Opre pinxt 1783

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A
D I S S E N T

FROM THE
CHURCH OF ENGLAND
FULLY JUSTIFIED,

AND PROVED TO BE THE
GENUINE AND JUST CONSEQUENCE OF THE ALLEGIANCE WHICH IS
DUE TO JESUS CHRIST, THE ONLY LAWGIVER IN THE CHURCH:

BEING THE
DISSENTING GENTLEMAN'S
THREE LETTERS AND POSTSCRIPT,
IN ANSWER TO THE
LETTERS of the Rev. Mr. WHITE, on that subject.

ALSO A
LETTER TO THE BISHOPS,
ON THE PRESENT STATE OF RELIGION IN THIS KINGDOM;
AND THE OPINIONS OF
THREE EMINENT LAWYERS,
ON THE QUESTION
Whether an action can be maintained against a Clergyman,
for refusing to admit a notorious evil-liver to the Sacra-
ment, who demands it as a qualification for an office;

THE SEVENTH EDITION,

By MICAHIAH TOWGOOD.

Cambridge:

PRINTED BY B. FLOWER,

FOR O. GREGORY; AND FOR S. WOOLMER, EXETER; C. SUTTON,
NOTTINGHAM; J. MARCH, NORWICH; W. H. LUNN,
OXFORD STREET; T. CONDER, BUCKLESBURY; AND
W. BUTTON, PATERNOSTER-ROW, LONDON.

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TO THE

SEVENTH EDITION.

THE established reputation of this work, and its unanswerable arguments in defence of non-conformity to the established church, render it a sort of standard book with the dissenters, and it may perhaps without impropriety be asserted, that no dissenting family ought to be without it. The present Edition is carefully printed from the last Octavo Edition, corrected by the venerable Author a short time before his death. The form in which it is now presented to the public affording a considerable reduction in the price, will, it is hoped, render its circulation still more extensive.

The Printer has to return his grateful acknowledgments to J. Towgood, Esq. Grandson of the Author, for his ready permission to print the present Edition, and for the use of the plate, from which the portrait prefixed is engraved.

B. F.

Cambridge, March 26, 1798.



THE
P R E F A C E,
TO THE
SIXTH EDITION.

THE gentleman, to whom these letters are addressed, having made it necessary for the Dissenters to vindicate their religious principles and practices, they think themselves happy, that, in consequence of the enlarged and liberal sentiments of the present age, they can make their defence without much danger of the heavy fines and imprisonments to which their forefathers were exposed.

A calm and unprejudiced examination of their cause, is the only method by which they wish to promote it. Such

an examination, they are confident, will shew,—That they are non-conformists to the established church in those points only, in which she is not conformed to the primitive and apostolic plan of discipline and of worship, as established in the word of God; and that, if the governours of this church would lay aside those things, which many of the most eminent of the clergy, as well as the most discerning of the laity, have long known, and even acknowledged, to be no part of genuine Christianity, the differences between Churchmen and Dissenters would cease, and we should immediately join together *with one heart, and with one mouth, giving glory to God.*

The Dissenters cheerfully appeal to every candid and impartial enquirer, who will attend to the subject, whether their dissent from the Church of England is not founded on the most weighty and cogent reasons. They have only one principle on which they rest their cause—THAT THE SCRIPTURES ARE A PERFECT RULE OF FAITH AND OF MANNERS; and that, as the power of interpreting authoritatively, for others, those scriptures, which contain the Christian Religion, cannot be assumed by any man without directly opposing the genius and spirit of that divine religion,

ligion, no civil magistrate has, ever had, or ever can have, any right, authority, or power, over the consciences and religious opinions of Christians.

The Dissenters, therefore, believe it to be their duty to enter their most solemn protest against the new edition of Christianity, with corrections and amendments, which their brethren of the establishment have taken upon them to set forth; and they have much satisfaction in knowing, that many of the wise, the learned, and the good, amongst all ranks and degrees, both of the clergy and the laity of the established church, have adopted, and are in many respects influenced by, the peculiar distinguishing principles of the Dissenters, though, from various motives, they do not openly profess themselves to be Dissenters.

No one, who entertains a just sense of the dignity of human nature, can forbear to treat with an honest indignation every restraint which the authority of the Church presumes to lay on his reasoning powers; and to this laudable pride of man it must be imputed, that of those who are unhappily tempted to submit to this unchristian usurpation, so many appear solicitous to re-assert their liberty and independence, and to

make by this means some atonement for the treason of which they have been guilty against the sacred rights of conscience. Hence it is, that often in their conversation and their sermons, and not seldom in their publications, they resume those unalienable privileges, which they once pretended to renounce, and shew, that *they will think and reason for themselves*, notwithstanding their former solemn declarations of assenting and consenting to the determinations of the Church.

While things continue in this state the Dissenters are well warranted in asserting, that their cause is countenanced, and that their distinguishing principles are virtually espoused, by a very respectable number of the clergy of the established church; for, all those who print, preach, speak, or even think, on religious subjects, in any degree contrary to the articles which they have subscribed, are so far *Dissenters* that they renounce the authority of the Church in matters of faith. Over men of this description the non-subscribing Dissenters have the greatest advantage in respect to that consistency of character, which is of so much importance to the true dignity and happiness of man.

It is hoped, that every person who reads the following defence of the principles

ciples of the Dissenters, will remember, that the only point in dispute between them and the defenders of the established Church is this:

WHETHER MEN ARE TO REASON AND JUDGE FOR THEMSELVES, CONCERNING THE ARTICLES OF FAITH, AND THE RITES AND CEREMONIES OF RELIGION, AS APPOINTED BY JESUS CHRIST, THE ONLY LAWGIVER OF THE CHRISTIAN CHURCH?

OR,

WHETHER THE CHURCH, AS BY LAW ESTABLISHED, HAS POWER TO DECREE RITES AND CEREMONIES AND AUTHORITY IN CONTROVERSIES OF FAITH?

May the God of truth judge between the contending parties ! He will judge in righteousness : and to him alone be the glory of dominion over conscience, and all authority in religion throughout all Churches, in all ages, Amen.

7

THE

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T H E
Dissenting Gentleman's
A N S W E R
T O T H E

Reverend Mr. W H I T E's

T H R E E L E T T E R S, &c.

S I R,

I Should not have chosen a debate of this kind in the present situation of our public affairs:*but, as you have done me the honour of publicly addressing to me three long letters for my conviction and edification, gratitude and good manners constrain me to answer.

As worldly considerations are very strong on your side, I assure you I have an ear always open to any thing that may shew conformity to be my duty. Dissenters are not men of so peculiar a turn of mind as to love suffering and reproach, or to despise the dignities, preferments, and lucrative posts, to the amount of millions a year, which are shared among their fellow-subjects, could they with a good conscience partake of them, as they have a natural right to do.

* These letters were first published in 1746, the year in which, notwithstanding this kingdom was so happily delivered from some of its distresses, by the defeat of the rebel army at Culloden, yet it was still engaged in a war with France and Spain.

But, notwithstanding this prejudice in favour of your argument, and all the ingenuity with which you set it off, I cannot say it has wrought in me the conviction you seemed to hope. So far, Sir, from this, that, the more carefully I examine the grounds of my separation, the more thoroughly I am convinced of its lawfulness and expediency; of its being a debt I owe to GOD, to Liberty, to Truth, and an act of homage and allegiance due to CHRIST, the only Lawgiver and King in his church.

I shall not enter upon the enquiry on which you largely expatiate, which are the best livers, Churchmen or Dissenters, and amongst which the best means for holy living are to be found. Let the world judge between us. Would to God that both of us had greater reason to boast!

The controversy between us, Sir, I apprehend, may easily be brought to a plain and short issue, if you will heartily join in it. It turns upon the single point of the XXth article of your church, *viz. That the CHURCH hath power to decree rites and ceremonies, and authority in matters of faith.* For, if the CHURCH hath really this authority and power, then all objections of the Dissenters, about sponsors, the cross in baptism, kneeling at the Lord's supper, and every other thing, are impertinent and vain: the church, having this authority, ought reverently to be obeyed. And if, instead of two or three ceremonies, it had enjoined two or three score; and if to the thirty-nine articles it had added a hundred besides, we ought meekly to have bowed down to her spiritual jurisdiction, and to have believed and practised as the Church had taught and enjoined.

But, if, on the contrary, the Church hath really and in truth no power at all, nor authority of this kind; yea, if CHRIST, the great Lawgiver and King of his Church, hath expressly commanded that no such power shall ever be claimed, or ever be yielded, by any of his followers, then your church is reprehensible and highly criminal
before

before God for usurping this power; and, consequently, the Dissenters are justified, and will have honour before God, for entering their protest against such usurpation; for asserting the rights and privileges of the Christian Church, and *for standing fast in the liberty wherewith CHRIST has made them free.*

You are pleased to represent our separation from the establishment in very black and terrifying colours, as a sin of nearly the first magnitude.—

“Our ministers,” you say, “have guilt lying heavily upon them on account of their schismatical and uncatholic proceedings.—They are notoriously peccant, (i. e. are great sinners,) in throwing off the authority of those whom they ought to obey and submit themselves to.—Their conduct is such as you challenge all the wit and ingenuity of the nation ever to reconcile with holy living.—You represent them as carnal, evil, and deceitful workers, disorderly walkers, whom God will undoubtedly, for these things, bring into judgement;* and the faithful, far from being permitted to enter into any pastoral relation to them, are not permitted to have any Christian communion with them; no, not so much as any intimate unnecessary acquaintance and familiarity with them in common life;”† with much more to the same purpose.

You speak also “of the Lay-dissenter as having stained his soul with guilt;‡ and of the doctrine on which our separation is built, as being false and dangerous.|| This you wish me to lay to heart, and seriously to consider.”

I have, according to your wish, Sir, laid it to heart, and seriously considered. The result of my consideration I shall now freely give you: and, in return, heartily wish, that, laying aside all prejudice and worldly attachments, you would

* Letter I. page 82, 83.

† Letter II. page 8.

|| Letter III. page 59.

‡ Letter II. page 26.

impartially consider—What is the true nature and constitution of the Christian Church ; and what the allegiance, which, as a subject of JESUS CHRIST, you owe to him, the only Law-giver and King in his Church, who will shortly call you to account for your conduct in this respect.

To come then to the point.—The Church, you say, and you have solemnly subscribed, *hath power to decree rites, and ceremonies, and authority in matters of faith.* This is the grand hinge upon which the whole controversy turns. Now, here, Sir, let me ask you,

FIRST, What Church is it to whom this authority and power are given ? You will, doubtless, say the Church of England ; for, the Church of England expressly claims and exercises this power ; and you avow and defend it in this exercise and claim : yea, this is the very basis on which its whole frame and hierarchy stand. It obliges all its ministers to subscribe to articles of faith, which it hath authoritatively decreed, and to use in religious worship, ceremonies and rites, which it hath authoritatively enjoined.

But mark, Sir, I beseech you, the consequences of this claim. If the Church of England hath really this authority and power, hath not the Church of France, the Church of Spain, the Church of Rome, the very same power ? Hath England, in this matter, any privilege from God, any spiritual prerogative, any charter from Heaven, which its neighbouring countries have not ? You can have no pretence to assert that it has. But, if it has no such privilege, or prerogative, then the Church of France and the Church of Rome have also, you must acknowledge, power to decree rites and ceremonies in God's worship, and authority in points of faith ; consequently, all the popperies and superstitions of the Romish Church, at least such as cannot be proved to be contrary to the word of God, are to be reverently submitted to by all the members of those Churches, and to be cordially received.

But,

But, does not this power, for which you contend, evidently oppose the principles of the Reformation itself, and subvert the very foundation of the Church you seek to establish? For, till you can shew why the Church of England is possessed of this power, but not the Church of Rome; why a body of acknowledged fallible men in Britain have authority to make and to enjoin articles of faith, but not a body of pretended infallible men at Trent; how England, became thus spiritually-gifted and endowed beyond all its neighbouring kingdoms;—your separation from the Church of Rome is incapable of a just and solid defence.

To this, perhaps, you will reply,—but our Church hath expressly guarded against any such abuse of the power it claims, by adding, in the XXth article, *Yet it is not lawful for the Church to ordain any thing that is contrary to God's word written; neither may it so expound one place of Scripture that it be repugnant to another.* But, upon this, I beg leave to make these two remarks:

1st. Whatever ceremony, or rite, cannot be shewn to be contrary to God's word, your Church, yea, the Church of Rome, hath, on your own principles, full authority to enjoin: consequently, as your Church, by virtue of this authority, hath enjoined the cross in baptism, it hath full power also to require you to cross yourselves whenever you enter your places of worship, say your prayers, look towards the east, touch the Bible, sit at meat.—It has full power to enjoin the use of salt and spittle in baptism, chrism, extreme unction, and a hundred other things, which are no more contrary to God's word than the cross in baptism is.

As your Church now consecrates ground, it has every whit as much power to consecrate the other element, and to make holy water as well as holy earth, and to order it to be decently sprinkled upon its members, (*for all things, you know, are to be done decently and in order,*) in token that they shall keep themselves pure from sin. It hath power to consecrate holy knives to cut the sacramental

tal bread; holy balons and ewers for the priest to wash in before the sacrament; holy vestments and robes, and a great variety of holy utensils, lighted tapers for the altar, &c. (all which, you know, Sir, was done by your admired Bishop Laud,) knocking on the breast, bowing towards the east, prostration before the altar:—all these, I say, and innumerable other ceremonies, your Church claims authority and power to enjoin; for none of these can be shewn to be more contrary to the word of God, or to be a whit more superstitious, ridiculous, or absurd, than the crossing at baptism, or the solemn consecration of churches and churchyards. But,

2dly, The limitation, or guard, which the article seems to put upon this power of the Church, is really of no force, and is in fact no limitation at all.

For, though it says that the Church *may not ordain any thing contrary to God's word, nor so expound one scripture, as to be repugnant to another*; yet, of this repugnance and contrariety, the Church alone, you will observe, and not every private person, is allowed to be the proper judge: for, otherwise, the article is absurd; it actually overthrows itself, and takes away with one hand what it gives with the other. For, if every private person hath authority to judge of the Church's decisions, and to reject them, if they appear to him repugnant to Scripture, then the Church's authority, in points of faith, is entirely destroyed. It is an authority to decree where no one is bound to submit. But such a senseless, unmeaning, impertinent claim, can never be the design and import of this article. It does claim therefore, for the Church, some real authority to settle points of faith; consequently, to points, thus authoritatively settled by it, private Christians, its members, are reverently to submit, even though to their own judgements they appear repugnant to the word of God.

This, Sir, must be the real meaning and intent of the article, notwithstanding the restrictive clause. Accordingly, in consequence of this claim,

claim, your Church hath authoritatively decreed thirty-nine articles of faith; and these it declares to have decreed *for the taking away difference of opinion, and to establish an agreement in true religion.** The plain language of authority. These articles it obliges all its ministers to subscribe; and our princes, as heads and governors of the Church, have authoritatively forbidden its clergy to preach any thing repugnant to them, and required them to frame their sermons according to the plan here prescribed. From all which it appears, that, notwithstanding the pretended limitation, there is a real authority claimed by the Church; that is to say, by its governors, to settle points of faith. But, if there be such authority really vested in them, then the people are bound to submit to their decisions, and have no right of private judgement to examine or reject them; for there cannot be two contradictory rights; a right in governors to prescribe, and a right in subjects to refuse.—But, if the Church of England has really this authority and right, the Church of Rome had it before her; and, as the elder and mother church, ought to have been obeyed. The reformation, therefore, as we are wont to call it, was a rebellion against superiors, a disobedience to the authority vested in the Church, and ought as such, to be renounced by returning to the Church of Rome.

In this manner, Sir, a Romish priest will turn upon the Church of England its own dangerous artillery; and, by the mere concessions of this XXth article, thousands of profelytes have, no doubt, been made from you. Nor with all your ingenuity, would you find it easy to ward off the force of such reasoning, should any of your parishioners be likely to be seduced. And this, perhaps, is the reason why the numerous converts these priests are said to make, are gathered all from your Church; whereas, from among the Dissenters, you scarcely ever hear of one being made. But,

* Preface to the XXXIX articles.

SECONDLY. I very much wish to be informed as to the persons who are invested with this authority and power.

You say, it is the Church : but who, I pray are the Church in whom this great power is lodged ? You will please to observe, it is not the Bishops and Clergy, who are wont to speak of themselves as our spiritual pastors and guides, as being *over us in the Lord, as stewards of the mysteries, &c.* This power to order the manner of God's worship, and, to settle articles of faith, is not at all lodged in them, but entirely in the King and Parliament of these realms.

You need not to be informed, Sir, that all the clergy of this kingdom, with all the bishops at their head, have not the least authority to enjoin one ceremony or rite of worship ; or to establish or annul one article of faith : on the contrary, all power and jurisdiction, relating to these matters, is lodged chiefly in lay hands ; in the king and parliament, the clergy being obliged to act in all things under their direction and controul. The king and parliament are, in truth, the real fathers, governors, or bishops, of this Church : these only have power to make or to unmake forms and rites of worship, and to authoritatively instruct and prescribe to the clergy what they are to believe,—in what manner, and to whom, the sacraments are to be given,—what prayers they are to offer up,—what doctrines to preach,—who are to be admitted to the episcopate, or priesthood, and who to be refused ;—by what ceremonies, and prayers, and exhortations, they are to be set apart, and consecrated to their office.—These with every other circumstance relating to religion and the worship of God, which is authoritatively prescribed or enjoined in your Church, you know, Sir, not the bishops and clergy, but the king with his parliament are the only persons who have authoritatively enjoined and prescribed them.

“ The Clergy of the whole land, in convocation
 “ assembled, cannot so much as attempt any canons
 “ or constitutions without the king's licence.

“ the King and Clergy make a canon, though it
 “ binds the Clergy in *re ecclesiastica*, yet it does
 “ not bind laymen.”*

Yea so far were the Bishops and Clergy from having any hand in the first forming our present established Church, or in ordering its rites and articles of faith, that it was done not only without, but in actual opposition to them: “ For, in the
 “ first of Queen Eliz. the parliament alone estab-
 “ lished the Queen’s supremacy and the common
 “ prayer book, in spite of all opposition from the
 “ Bishops in the house of lords; and the convoca-
 “ tion, then sitting, were so far from having any
 “ hand in those church acts for reformation, that
 “ they presented to the Parliament several propo-
 “ sitions in behalf of the tenets of Popery, directly
 “ contrary to the proceedings of the Parlia-
 “ ment.”—†

Hence, then, Sir, I think you must be compelled to own (what I know gentlemen of your robe do not care to hear) viz. That the Church of England is really a parliamentary church; that it is not properly an ally, but a mere creature of the state. It depends entirely upon the acts and authority of Parliament for its very essence and frame. The qualifications of its ministers, their power to offici-

* Vide Examination of the Codex, &c. page 114, 148.

“ By the 25th of Henry VIII. chap. 19. it is a *præmunire* for
 “ the convocation to meet without the King’s writ; and
 “ when they are met to do any thing without the King’s
 “ licence; and then no resolution of theirs to have the
 “ force of a *canon*, unless the King confirm it. Nor is it
 “ then valid if it be contrariant or repugnant to the laws,
 “ statutes, and customs, of this realm, or be to the damage
 “ or hurt, of the King’s prerogative royal.—And of this
 “ the courts of Westminster-hall must judge.” Hale in his
 “ Analysis, p. 12, says, “ If ecclesiastical laws are not
 “ confirmed by Parliament, the King may revoke and an-
 “ nul them at his will and pleasure.” Vide notes on an
 Answer to the Examination of the Bishop of London’s Co-
 dex.

† Vide Priestcraft in Perfection, preface, p. 4.

ate, the manner in which they are to administer the sacraments are all limited and prescribed by authority of Parliament ; and this authority, which at first made, can alone alter and new make it ; can abolish or add to its articles or rites according to its pleasure, even though the whole body of Bishops and Clergy should ever so much dislike or protest earnestly against it.

It is a point therefore incontestible, that the Church, which your article declares to have this authority and power, is no other than the King and Parliament of these realms. But,

THIRDLY. The grand difficulty which yet remains, and which, without your assistance, I shall never get over, is, how came the civil magistrate by this authority in the Church of CHRIST ? Who gave him this power to decree rites, in Christian worship, which CHRIST never decreed ; and to make articles of faith which CHRIST never made ? Neither CHRIST, nor the Apostles, ever gave him this authority : from whom then is it derived ?

The *subjection to higher powers, and obedience to magistrates*, which the Scriptures enjoin upon Christians, relates only to civil, not at all to religious matters ; for this obvious reason, that the magistrate at that time was every where Pagan. The apostles, therefore, instead of paying, or exhorting Christians to pay, any subjection to him in religious affairs, strenuously exhorted them to renounce and disavow it,—*to come out from among them and be separate*. They were every where, you know, Sir, Dissenters from the established Church.

Christianity is so far from enjoining, that it actually forbids, obedience to civil governors in things of a religious nature. It commands us to *call no man upon earth father or master*,* i.e. to acknowledge no authority or jurisdiction of any in matters of religion, but to remember that ONE, *one only is our master* and law-giver, even CHRIST ; and all Christians are brethren, i. e. stand upon an

* Matt. xxiii. 8, 9.

equal footing, having no dominion over one another. Though *the princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they who are great exercise authority upon them, yet it shall not*, our LORD says, *be so amongst you.** Nay, your Church replies in this its XXth article, *but it shall be so amongst us.*—There are some who *have authority over others* in matters of faith.—There are *other masters* besides CHRIST.—Thus the article and the scripture manifestly clash. Will you be so good, Sir, as to adjust the controversy between them, and tell me which I am to follow?

The Church is CHRIST's kingdom: *a kingdom not of this world.* For his voluntary humiliation and suffering of death he is advanced to the high honour of being sole Law-giver, Judge, and Sovereign, in religious matters. He only hath authority to fix the terms of communion for his followers or church; and whoever shall presume to alter or new make the terms of communion which he himself has fixed, is guilty of the greatest arrogance, as he thereby invades his authority and throne. But this we apprehend is what you have done. YOU will not now receive a person to public baptism, or the LORD's supper, upon the terms on which CHRIST and his apostles would have received him. Neither CHRIST nor his apostles ever made the sign of the cross, or other sponsors besides the parents, necessary to a child's baptism; nor did they ever make kneeling a necessary term of receiving the sacramental supper; but both those YOU make necessary.* Thus you have taken upon you to new-model the Church of CHRIST, to change and set aside his laws, and to make others in their room.

* Matt. xx. 25.

† The XXVIIIth canon requires the minister never willingly to administer the communion to any but to such as kneel. The XXIXth canon requires that no parent shall be urged to be present at his child's baptism, nor be admitted to answer as godfather for his own child.

Now

Now give me leave to ask you, Sir, by what authority do you presume to reject those from your Church, whom, in your conscience, you believe CHRIST and his apostles would have received into theirs? Are you wiser than they? Or is your Church better framed, and more perfect than theirs? If an honest and sincere Christian now brings his child to you to be publicly baptised, desiring it may be done without the sign of the cross, and that himself may stand forth as surety for its education, would you not refuse him? Or, if he desired to be admitted to the communion of Christians, in the other sacrament of the LORD's supper, but that he might not take it kneeling, would you not reject him? But, if the same person had come to JESUS CHRIST or the apostles, offering himself and his child upon the same terms, would they not have received him? But, how is it, Sir, that you take upon you to reject from CHRIST's Family and Church those whom you believe he himself would have received! Is not this *lording it over* God's heritage, and usurping CHRIST's throne? Is it not setting yourselves up for law-makers and rulers in his kingdom, claiming homage from his subjects? And are not his faithful subjects, by the allegiance they owe him, obliged to enter their protest against such usurpation, and to *stand fast in that liberty wherewith CHRIST hath set them free*?

Where then, let me appeal to your own sober judgment, does the guilt of schism lie? upon you or upon us? Upon us, who offer ourselves to communion in your Church upon the terms which CHRIST appointed, and are ready to do every thing which CHRIST has commanded? Or upon you, who absolutely reject us, unless, besides what CHRIST hath ordered, we will submit also to some orders and devices of your own? We come as the LORD's servants, and desire to eat at the LORD's table, with reverent submission to all his appointments. Nay, but, say you, you shall not come to the LORD's table unless you will kneel; i. e. unless you will come in that posture, which though CHRIST in his wisdom did not think proper, yet
which

which we in our wisdom have thought proper to ordain : [in other words,] unless besides being CHRIST's servants, you will also be ours, and pay subjection to our institution and authority in this religious rite.

This, Sir, is the true state of the controversy between us. Judge now, I pray you, with the impartiality of a Christian, who makes the schism, and who has reason to fear *being brought into judgment*, by the great Law-giver of the Church, for the unhappy breach which subsists.——Let a great prelate, who at present adorns one of the highest stations of your Church, be heard as judge between us. “ In all other societies, the express will of the founder, and the terms of fellowship and communion which he has laid down, are accounted sacred. In all other kingdoms the will of the supreme power is a law. No one pretends, or dares pretend, to make laws of equal force with his. How hard then is the fate of the Christian Church or of the kingdom of CHRIST, when his will is declared insufficient, and the invented words and decisions of his subjects are made co-ordinate with his own, equally exclusive of others of his subjects from the communion of their fellow subjects ! And how hard is the fate of those believers in him, who *desire communion upon the terms God has prescribed*, to be excluded by the words of men ; by the inventions of men, imposed upon them for his precepts ! And how unhappy is the Church, to be reduced by any such methods within more narrow bounds than our LORD himself has confined it !”*

But you are in readiness to retort, and with great assurance tell me, “ That the avoidance of kneeling, insisted upon by our ministers, is not less an imposition than your enjoining it.—— That we do really impose the observance of one particular gesture upon our communicants.——

* Bishop of Winchester's Postscript to his Answer to Dr. Hare's Sermon, p. 254.

“ That *sitting* is the regular unvaried practice of
 “ our churches; observed as constantly and uni-
 “ versally amongst us as *kneeling* is amongst you,—
 “ never allowed to be departed from; which our
 “ ministers require, insist upon, and refuse to
 “ abate.”—And you ask me, “ If one should
 “ present himself to take the sacrament standing,
 “ or offer to take it on his knees, whether I do not
 “ think he would undergo some severe expostula-
 “ tions, and be plainly told we had no such custom,
 “ nor the Churches of God, and it would not be
 “ given him at all!”*

I believe the world will be surprised, Sir, and, that an ingenuous blush will cover your own face, when you find that this account of us is absolutely without truth, and quite contrary to fact. I have spent my whole life amongst the Dissenters, and am acquainted with a great number of their churches and ministers; but never once, till now, heard that *sitting* at the Lord's table was ever insisted on as a term of communion with them, or that it is their unvaried and universal practice. The contrary to this I know to be truth. In the Church, to which I myself belong, there is a person who for many years has constantly received the elements kneeling, without the least offence to the congregation, or any expostulation from the Minister on that account. In some of our churches, I am well informed, there are some who receive standing, some kneeling: in this every one amongst us is left entirely at his liberty. Though the posture of sitting be generally thought by us most suitable to the commemorative supper of our Lord, instituted instead of the paschal supper of the Jews, and most agreeable to the practice of Christ and his Apostles, who, without any doubt, sat around the table, yet, in this, we are all left to follow freely our own persuasion. Nor, is there, I believe, amongst our Ministers, one in five hundred who would refuse to administer the sacrament, either standing or kneeling, to any one who thought either

* Letter II. p. 56, 57, 58. Letter III. p. 8, 9.

of these the fittest posture of receiving it. Our liberty, as to this matter, you might have seen in Baxter's Reformed Liturgy, where it is expressly said,—“ And let none of the people be forced to sit, stand, or kneel, in the act of receiving, whose judgment is against it.” And, in Dr. Calamy's brief account, &c. which you appear to have read, —“ The communicants amongst Protestant Dissenters are at liberty to use their own posture in the time of receiving, though a table-gesture is most commonly used.”*

Thus, Sir, I have at large considered your charge of Schism upon the Dissenters; and hope that, by this time, you begin to think more favourably of us, to justify our principles as truly catholic and generous, and to admit that they are the only foundation on which the peace of the Church can be solidly fixed; and that the guilt of the separation lies wholly on your church, which insists upon unchristian and unscriptural terms of communicating with it.

But I hope to complete your conviction, Sir, and to wipe off every speck of the taint of schism from Dissenters, by calling to your remembrance your own excellent definition of the catholic, or Christian Church, and reasoning with you on it. “ The catholic Church,” you say,† “ is one outward and visible society, divinely instituted; the most admirable and glorious society under heaven.”—Pursue, Sir, the consequences of your own definition, and it will soon end the debate. If it be a society divinely instituted, then whatever society is not of divine, but of merely human institution, is not the Church of CHRIST. If it be a society divinely instituted, then the terms of admission into this society, and the qualifications of its members, are divinely fixed, i.e. fixed by the will and authority of God: whatever visible society then hath its terms of admission and the qualifications of its members not divinely fixed, fixed only by the will and authority of men, cannot be the truly catholic and Christian Church.

* Letter to a Divine in Germany, p. 11. † Let. I. p. 73.

Now here shall I entreat you, Sir, with the impartiality of a Christian, who has nothing but truth and the will of God in view, to pause a moment, and compare the constitution of the Church of England and the constitution of the Church of CHRIST, and see if they are not societies of a quite different frame ; the one a human, the other a divine, institution ; the one resting entirely on the authority and will of men, the other upon the will and authority of God.

If you enquire after the constitution and frame of the Church of CHRIST, where must you look for it ? Only in the Bible.* But, if you enquire after the constitution and frame of the Church of England, where must you look for that ? In the Statute-book, in the Canons, and Common Prayer book, and in the Codes of the English law.

The Church of CHRIST is a religious establishment, founded upon the Scriptures as the only authentic rule of its doctrines and worship : the Church of England is a civil establishment, founded upon acts of parliament, as the only authentic rule of what is to be believed and practised therein. The one a spiritual structure, built upon the foundation of the Apostles and Prophets, JESUS CHRIST himself being the Chief corner-stone : the other a political structure, built upon the foundation of the lords and commons of the realm, the King, as supreme head, being the chief corner-stone.

Into the Church of CHRIST any person may be admitted who submits to the terms appointed by CHRIST ; but into the Church of England he cannot be admitted, except, over and above these, he submits also to terms which human authority hath instituted and devised.

In CHRIST'S Church the Lord's Supper is appointed and used only for spiritual and religious ends ; but, in the Church of England, it is notoriously used for political and worldly purposes. In the former it was appointed with intention and as

* The Bible only is the religion of Protestants. *Chillingworth.*

a mean of uniting all Christians, and of destroying all variance and distinctions between them. In the latter it is appointed with intention and as a mean of discriminating and dividing Christians, and of making a distinction between one another.

In the Christian Church, no openly debauched, or scandalously wicked, person has a right to come to the table of the Lord, or to partake of its provisions; but, in the Church of England, if such a person had a commission from the King in the army or the fleet, or any profitable post, this gives him a right to come to the communion-table, a right to demand the holy elements at the priest's hands, as a qualification for his post.

In the scriptural Church of CHRIST there are no such officers ever heard of as archbishops, deans, archdeacons, prebendaries, canons, chancellors, &c.—But there is another church, you know, Sir, where these are officers of great influence, of high importance and rank. But whence came this pompous train! From the apostolic fountain at Jerusalem, or from the corrupted source at Rome?

The Church of Christ never excommunicates, nor pretends to exercise its discipline upon any but its own members: *For, what have I do, the Apostle says, to judge them that are without?** But the Church of England extends its ecclesiastical authority over those who never belonged to it; and, by a very extraordinary act of power, excommunicates such as never were of its communion; that is, it casts such from, who never were in, it. In common life such a thing would be reckoned marvellous indeed. But miracles of this kind, Sir, your Church, you know, sometimes works.

Again: the rod, with which the Church of Christ chastises its delinquents, is spiritual, not carnal; but the rod of the Church of England is carnal, not spiritual. By the constitution of the former, the excommunicated member is only to be deprived of spiritual privileges, such as fellow-

* 1 Cor. v. 12.

ship in prayer, singing, sacrament, &c. As for his civil property and rights, it meddles not with these; for, CHRIST's kingdom is not of this world; but by the constitution of the latter, the excommunicated member is delivered over to the civil arm to humble and chastise him; he is disabled from asserting his natural rights, from being a witness, from bringing actions at law; and, if he do not submit in forty days, a writ shall issue forth to imprison him.

In the Church of Jesus Christ, those, who are entrusted with ecclesiastical discipline, are solemnly charged before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect Angels, to be no respecter of persons, to do nothing by partiality, and not to prefer one before another: * neither the gold ring, nor the gay clothing, † nor pecuniary gifts, are to have any influence upon their ecclesiastical proceedings, but the poor are to receive the same measure with the rich. But is it thus, Sir, in the Church of England? May not a grievous sinner according to her constitution, be suffered to commute? to have pardon for money, and to screen himself by a round fee from the stroke of the Church's rod? Yea, when he is going to be delivered, or actually is delivered, into the hands of the Devil, and Satan has him in keeping, will not a handsome sum presently pluck him thence, and restore him to the Church's soft and indulgent bosom again? —

You remember, Sir, the heathen satyrist,

At vos,
Dicite, pontifices, in sacris quid facit aurum!

Persius, Sat. II.

And you know what was said, upon a like occasion, by a much greater than he:—*Thy money perish with thee; because thou hast thought that the gift of God may be purchased with money, thou hast neither part nor lot in this matter.* ‡

* 1 Tim. v. 21. † James ii. 2 3. ‡ Acts vii. 20, 21.

Some

Some of the most sacred acts of spiritual jurisdiction, its solemn censures and excommunications, are exercised in the Church of England by unconsecrated and mere lay-men. These *hold the keys*, open or shut, cast out or admit into, according to their sole pleasure. The chancellors, officials, surrogates, who administer the jurisdiction of spiritual courts, and determine the most important spiritual matters, such as *delivering men to the Devil*, &c. frequently are, and, by express provision of law, always may be, laymen. And, truly, Sir, I greatly pity you gentlemen of the Clergy, that some of the most tremendous and solemn parts of your sacred office, such as excommunications, absolutions, &c. you are forced to perform, not according to, but sometimes, perhaps, directly against, your own judgements, as you are authoritatively directed and commanded by these laypersons. Forced, I say, to do it, notwithstanding what you urge about your own concurrence; for, if you refuse to concur, you are immediately liable to suspension *ab officio & beneficio*; and if you continue obstinate, to be excommunicated yourselves.*

The Church of JESUS CHRIST never owed its support to the powers, preferments, and riches, of this world. It was of God, and therefore wanted no such aids: it was its glory that it made its way, and was established upon earth not only without, but in direct opposition to them: it commands its ministers *not to strive, but to be gentle to all men; in meekness, instructing those who gainsay*. (2 Tim. ii. 24, 25.) But the Church of England, conscious of its weakness, props itself on

* There is one thing, says Bishop Burnet, yet wanting to complete the reformation of the Church; which is, to restore primitive discipline against scandalous persons, the establishing the government of the Church in ecclesiastical hands, and taking it out of lay hands, which have so long profaned it, and have exposed the authority of the Church and the censures of it, chiefly excommunication, to the contempt of the nation; so that the dreadfulest of all censures is now become the most scorned and despised.—Hist. Reform. abridg. p. 367.

every side with civil dignities and emoluments, calls in the powers and riches of this world to its support and defence, deeply intrenches itself under penal laws ; and, thus fortified, thunders out its excommunications, and threats of fines and imprisonments, upon all who shall dare to write or speak any thing derogatory to its ceremonies and forms of worship, or its articles of faith.*

There is one difficulty more, Sir, which I could never possibly get over : it seems to hang as a dead and insuperable weight upon the frame of your Church : if you are dexterous enough to remove it, you will merit Lambeth for a reward.

The Church of England and the Church of Christ seem to be two societies, absolutely distinct, and of a quite different constitution, as they have two different heads, or fountains, of power, whence all authority, jurisdiction, and ministrations, in the two churches, severally spring. In the Church of Jesus Christ, he himself is *supreme head*, the only Lawgiver and Sovereign : *To us there is but one Lord.† One is your master, even Christ.‡ Gave him to be head over all things to the Church.¶ All power is given to me in heaven and in earth, go ye, therefore, teach all nations.¶¶* CHRIST is the only fountain of influence, jurisdiction, and power, in his Church, by commission from whom alone all its officers act.

* The IVth, Vth, and VIth, canons solemnly denounce, “ That whosoever shall affirm that the form of God’s worship, contained in the Common Prayer, hath any thing in it repugnant to the word of God,—or that any of the XXXIX articles are in any part erroneous, or such as may not with a good conscience be subscribed,—let him be excommunicated *ipso facto*, and not be restored until he repent and publicly revoke his wicked errors.”

And, by the Act of Uniformity, it is enacted, “ That, if any one shall declare or speak any thing in the derogation, or depraving of the Book of Common Prayer, he shall, for the first offence, suffer imprisonment one whole year without bail or mainprize ; and, for the second offence, shall be imprisoned during his life.”

† 1 Cor. viii. 6. ‡ Matt. xxiii. 8. ¶ Ephes. i. 22.

¶¶ Matt. xxviii. 18, 19.

But

But in the Church of England, you well know, Sir, the King, or Queen, is supreme head, “ vested with
 “ all power to exercise all manner of ecclesiastical
 “ jurisdiction ; and archbishops, bishops, archdea-
 “ cons, and other ecclesiastical persons, have no man-
 “ ner of jurisdiction ecclesiastical, but by and under
 “ the King’s Majesty, who hath full power and au-
 “ thority to hear and determine all manner of
 “ causes, ecclesiastical, and to reform and correct
 “ all vice, sin, errors, heresies, enormities, abu-
 “ ses, whatsoever, which, by any manner of spi-
 “ ritual authority, or jurisdiction, ought or may
 “ be lawfully reformed.*—

At the first establishment of this church under Henry VIII. and Edward VI. all the Bishops took out commissions from the crown, for exercising their spiritual jurisdiction, in these kingdoms, during the King’s pleasure only ; “ and in
 “ their commissions acknowledge all sort of jurif-
 “ diction, as well ecclesiastical as civil, to have
 “ flowed originally from the regal power as from
 “ a supreme head, and a fountain and spring of
 “ all magistracy within his own kingdom.”†

Yea, even the power of ordination itself, which is reckoned the peculiar province of the episcopal office, the first reformers and founders of this Church derived from the King, and exercised only as by authority from him, and during his pleasure. “ Thus Cranmer, Archbishop of Canter-
 “ bury, Bonner, Bishop of London, &c. took out
 “ commissions from the Crown, importing, that,
 “ because the vicegerent (Cromwell, a lay per-
 “ son) could not personally attend the charge in
 “ all parts of the kingdom, the King authorises the
 “ Bishop in his (the King’s or perhaps the Vice-
 “ gerent’s) stead to ordain, within his diocese,
 “ such as he judged worthy of holy orders ; to
 “ collate to benefices ; to give institution ; and to
 “ execute all other parts of the episcopal autho-

* 26 Henry VIII. cap. I. 37 Henry VIII. cap. xvii.

† Eliz. cap. i.

† Burnet’s Hist. Reform. Part II. Col. page 91.

“ rity ;

“ rity ; and this during the King’s pleasure only.*

In consequence of this supremacy, the King, or Queen, of this Church, hath power to excommunicate from, or to re-admit into, it, independent of, yea, in direct opposition to, all its Bishops and Clergy. The King, or Queen, can revoke, at pleasure, any spiritual censures of the Bishops or Archbishops ; yea, can of themselves suspend, derive, or even excommunicate ; or can, by their proclamation only, without the least confession, humiliation, or satisfaction, for their offence, pardon and restore excommunicated persons to the bosom of the church again.†

Yea, farther, they have power to forbid all preaching for a time, as did K. Henry VIII. K. Edward VI. Q. Mary, Q. Eliz.—to limit, instruct, and prescribe to the clergy, what they shall, and what they shall not, preach, as did Q. Eliz. K. James I. K. Charles I. K. William, &c. Finally, to the King or Queen only, does it pertain to declare what is heresy, and authoritatively to pronounce what doctrines and tenets are, and what are not, to be censured as such. Nor have all the Bishops and Clergy, assembled in convocation, the least authority to censure any tenet as heretical if the prince on the throne refuse his consent.

Now here, Sir, I am pressed with an insuperable difficulty how to reconcile this constitution of the Church of England with the constitution of the Church of Christ. Are they not most indubitably two different societies, subject to two different, sometimes opposite, authorities, animated and governed by two different heads ? In Christ’s church, himself is the only sovereign and head : he only hath power to decree ceremonies and rites, to fix terms of communion and authority in points of

* Vide Examination of the *Codex Juris*, &c. pages 32, 33.

† A Parson was deprived for adultery : afterwards a general pardon came, which pardoned the adultery. It was adjudged that the Parson was, *ipso facto* restored to his benefice. Coke 6. Rep. 13.

faith: nor hath any earthly prince power to make laws in his kingdom, which shall bind the consciences of his subjects, or sovereignly to dictate to his servants and ministers what they shall believe, and what they shall preach. Yea, his subjects are expressly commanded and charged to receive nothing as doctrine, or parts of religion, which are only *commandments of men*.*

But, in the Church of England, there is another sovereign, lawgiver, supreme head, besides Jesus Christ; an authority which commands things Christ never commanded, which teaches doctrines Christ never taught, which enjoins terms of communion, and rites of religious worship, he never enjoined. Now what can I judge, Sir! What do you yourself judge! but that the two churches are two distinct and quite different societies, (for, in one and the same society, surely there cannot be two supreme heads,) that they are framed after different models, consist of different members, are governed by different officers, statutes, and laws; consequently, my separation, or dissent, from the one, does, by no means, infer my separation from the other. Yea, what am I to judge, but that, by the allegiance I owe to Christ my only supreme head and king in spiritual matters, I am obliged to enter my protest against the pretensions and claims of any other supreme head? For, can a man *serve two masters*? Can he be subject at the same time to two supreme heads? Can he be faithful to Christ, the only King of the Church, and yet acknowledge another king as a fountain of all magistracy and power therein? Surely he cannot.

Permit me, Sir, to exercise your patience a moment or two more upon this remarkable contrast, and I will dismiss the unpleasant subject.

By the constitution of the Church of Christ, it is expressly ordered and declared, *That the woman shall not be suffered publicly to teach, nor usurp authority over the man.*†—

* Matt. xv. 9.

† 1 Tim. ii. 12.

But,

But, by the constitution of the Church of England, the woman is permitted *publicly to teach*; yea, to limit and controul in spiritual and religious matters, and authoritatively to instruct the bishops and clergy, and all the men in the land. Thus did Queen Elizabeth, thus did Queen Anne, and thus hath every Queen authority to do that sits upon our throne; authority to prescribe and dictate to all, both ministers and people, what the one are to preach and the other to receive. And, was it not, Sir, a very comely and edifying sight to behold the two houses of convocation waiting upon Queen Anne,* in the case of Whiston's books upon the Trinity, to be instructed by her majesty whether they were to be condemned as heretical or not? That venerable and learned body had solemnly decreed them to be dangerous and heretical; but this their censure was of no force till they had laid it before the Queen to have her judgement upon the point. Upon her majesty's determination it entirely depended, whether Whiston's tenets were to be rejected by the Church of England as erroneous, or not. Her majesty, in this case, was of a different opinion from her two houses of convocation; she thought not fit to censure the books. So her single opinion, strange to relate! her single opinion carried it against that of her bishops and clergy. She over-rules and sets aside all their proceedings, restrains and counteracts them, in one of the very chief of their pastoral functions, the guarding against errors and heresies in the church.

Behold here, Sir, a woman exercising spiritual ecclesiastical authority over the man! Yea, behold the representative of the clergy of the whole land, a most learned, grave, and venerable, body, waiting upon a woman, to learn from her mouth what the church is to believe, and what to reject, as to this great mystery of faith: upon a woman, by whose sole determination, (I repeat it with astonishment, and you hear it, no doubt, with per-

* Anno 1711.

plexity and grief,) your church was uncontrollably and authoritatively directed in this deep and mysterious point.

I ask you, Sir, in the name of God, Is this the constitution and frame of the Church of Christ? Is it not a constitution of a quite different nature; a society not divinely, but humanly, instituted; and, therefore, by your own definition, not the Church of Christ? And may not, think you, a person separate peaceably from it without any the least danger of thereby separating himself from the only scriptural, apostolic, and catholic, church?

When you stript the pope of his supremacy, and gave it to our princes, you should have taken care not to have left his infallibility behind. An infallible head and director of the Church, be it woman or man, be it a he or a she bishop, is a thing plausible enough, and carries a good face: but, to lodge the absolute direction of the consciences, the faith, and the discipline, of the Church with a fallible head! to give a prince, yea, a lady bred up in all the softnesses and diversions of a court, an uncontrollable dominion over the religious conduct both of clergy and laity, authoritatively to direct what those are to preach, and what these to believe as to the doctrine of Christ! to make her the sole judge in all controversies which shall arise upon any the most mysterious and inexplicable points, so that all the priests are to *ask knowledge at her lips*, and whatever she determines is to be received by the Church as Christian verity and truth!—This is such a constitution as quite shocks the understanding, and comes not a whit behind transubstantiation itself. Hence, doubtless, Sir, the triumphs of popish priests over you! Hence, their inroads upon you, and the thousands they are continually carrying captive from your tents! And hence the sad increase, and the insults, of Deists, who, taking the scheme of the Church of England to be that of the Christian Church, are authorised by common sense, they think, not only to reject, but to treat it with contempt!

D

And

And now, Sir, having so largely discussed this point, I presume you are convinced, "That this same peaceable separation of ours is not," what you call it, "a piece of errant nonsense and contradiction; and that you will cease to be so displeased at our treating your grave lectures upon the heinous sin of schism as solemn cant and ecclesiastical scare-crows. You see, likewise, how extremely unapt, and quite wide of the point, are the two instances you bring to illustrate our case, viz. "of a wife separating from the bed and board of "her husband,—or of two or three counties disliking a monarchical government, and throwing "off their allegiance to the king."* Has the Church of England, Sir, any such power or authority over us Dissenters as the husband has over the wife? Pray who gave it that authority? Have we ever plighted it our troth? or bound ourselves by a solemn vow to honour and obey it to the end of our lives? Or have we ever sworn allegiance to it, or do we owe it any homage, as the counties have sworn and do owe to the King?

Amongst the peculiar excellencies of your Church, you reckon "The use of the three creeds "in public worship, as one of the most effectual and "powerful means both for teaching and preserving the Christian faith entire and uncorrupt, which we have not in our churches."† The Creed, called the apostles, we have in constant use amongst us: and, as for the two others, especially the Athanasian, we are content you should have the honour of its being peculiar to yourselves. But, methinks, Sir, it should a little check your triumph over us here, to remember, that some of the wisest and most illustrious members of your church, both clergy and laity, account the use of this creed your great sin and reproach, and, with Archbishop Tillotson, wish you were well rid of it.

What! are you, Sir, amongst the weak and uncharitable minds who *damn to the pit of hell* those who cannot receive all the dark and mysterious points set forth in that creed! Do you in your conscience think that there is no salvation for *those*

* Letter I. page 72.

† Letter I. page 5.

who do not faithfully believe the several articles it contains, and that whosoever doth not keep whole and undefiled the faith therein delivered, he shall without doubt perish everlastingly? What! the many great and worthy persons, bright ornaments of your own church, (who, instead of *keeping it whole and undefiled*, have openly disavowed, preached, and wrote, against it, dying in this disbelief,) have they, *without peradventure everlastingly perished?* Alas! for the good Doctors Clarke, Whitby, Burnet, &c.—for the illustrious Sir Isaac Newton, &c. &c. Yea, alas! for the whole Greek church, who, for having rejected that clause, both in the Athanasian and the Nicene creed, commonly called *Filioque*, which asserts that the Holy Ghost is of the Father, and the Son, neither made, nor created, nor begotten, but proceeding, are gone down, it seems, to the infernal pit; so that, notwithstanding their great knowledge and piety in this world, yet, for not believing the Athanasian creed, they are sunk into everlasting darkness and damnation in the other! Do you wonder that Deism prevails if this be genuine Christianity?

It is a fact, I presume, indisputable, that a great part of the most learned and virtuous of your clergy are departed from the Athanasian doctrine; and that those of them, who are not, do by no means think its belief absolutely and indispensably necessary to salvation. What now must a Deist think, when he hears both the one and the other, thirteen times a year most solemnly declaring, in the presence of Almighty God, and as instructors of his people, *that, whoever will be saved, it is before all things necessary that he hold the Athanasian faith*; and most peremptorily denouncing everlasting damnation upon those who do not believe it; that is, many of them denouncing damnation upon themselves! Is this your “powerful and effectual” means of preserving the Christian faith? I should think it one of the most effectual to subvert and destroy it. It has, no doubt, been, in fact, a great stumbling-block in the way of Infidels and Jews, and hardened them in their opposition to

the religion of Christ, when they see it dooming to undoubted and everlasting perdition all who do not heartily and sincerely (for that must be meant by faithfully) believe these deep and mysterious points, which you must acknowledge to be inexplicable, and far above the powers of reason to comprehend.

“ But the Dissenting Ministers, you tell me, who have complied with the terms of the toleration, have solemnly subscribed the VIIIth article, which approves the Athanasian creed.”* Let Dr. Calamy answer: † “ The Dissenting Ministers, about the city, in a body, gave in their sense of the articles when they subscribed them; and among the rest, of this VIIIth article; in the gloss upon which the damnatory clauses of this creed are expressly excluded the subscription. And there was something of the same nature done in several parts of the country.” Now the fathers and predecessors of the present Dissenting Ministers having made this public protest and declaration at their subscription, and the legislature having accepted, or, at least, not rejected, it, under the favour of this protest their successors may be supposed now to subscribe with the same disapprobation of the damnatory clause. If it were not to be thus taken, there is I hope, not a minister among us but would publicly disown and renounce his subscription.

I should now proceed, Sir, to the examination of the other parts of your letters, to shew the great insufficiency of your arguments and objections; and to observe, that, in many instances, you have extremely mistaken, and given quite wrong representations of, our religious principles and practice. — But I relieve your patience for the present. If this province be undertaken by no other hand, you may, in some time, expect to hear farther from,

S I R,

Your very humble servant,

A DISSENTER.

* Appendix, page 78.

† Life of Mr. Baxter, page 236.

THE
Dissenting Gentleman's

SECOND

LETTER, &c.

SIR,

IT is with regret I proceed in vindication of my dissent, as it will constrain me to say some things which may seem to be disrespectful to established forms of worship. But self-defence is a principle which generous minds allow strongly to operate. I highly reverence and esteem, and most heartily rejoice in, the great number of illustrious and excellent persons, both clergy and laity, of which the Church of England can boast. But yet, as the present established forms were drawn up when this kingdom just emerged out of Popish darkness; and, as in drawing them up, especial regard was had to the then weakness of the people, who could not be all at once entirely brought off from the old ceremonies and forms: as there are several parts of our liturgy and ecclesiastical constitution which a great number, I apprehend, if not all our bishops and clergy, wish to see altered; and finally, as the alteration of those, and the removing a few things, acknowledged in themselves to be mutable and indifferent, would heal the unhappy breach, and restore the chief part of the dissenters to the church;

church ; upon all these accounts, I may be allowed, I hope, with freedom to make my defence against your vigorous attacks ; and to represent my objections, and the grounds of my dissent, in as strong a light as I am able.

The part of a public monitor, and of my instructor in this affair, which you have voluntarily taken upon you, will allow me, as I go along, to put you in mind of one or two great objections which Dissenters are wont to urge, but which you have quite overlooked, and to intreat you will direct me how to get over them.

“ We letter-writers (say you) have a privilege
“ of setting down our thoughts as they offer them-
“ selves, without scrupulously adhering to a strict
“ and close method.”* This privilege you have indeed, with great freedom taken : I shall therefore, be indulged in the same.

To begin, then, with your defence of sponsors in baptism. When an infant is brought to be entered by baptism into the family, or church, of God, and a solemn vow and engagement are to be made before the Church for its religious education, it is the opinion of the Dissenters, that the parents, whose child it is and to whom both God and Nature have committed its education, are the proper persons to stand forth, and take upon them this great and important trust ; and to bind themselves by a solemn vow faithfully to discharge it. Now our objections to the order and practice of your Church are,

1. That, in a very arbitrary and strange manner, without the least shadow of authority from reason, or scripture, or the ancient practice of the Church, you actually set aside the parents in this solemnity, and forbid them to stand forth and take upon them this great charge to which God hath called them. For, your XXIXth canon expressly commands, *That no parent shall be urged to be present at his child's baptism, nor be admitted to answer as god-father for his own child.* And,

* Letter III. page 60.

2. That you require other persons to appear in the parents stead, and to take upon them this important trust, and most solemnly to promise, before God and the Church, the performance of that which few of them ever do, or ever intend to perform, or perhaps are ever capable of performing. What now, Sir, is your answer to these objections of the Dissenters? Why, truly, the first, which is indeed the chief, you very prudently slip over; and attempt not the least apology for setting aside the parents; so that you leave us still to consider this, as a thing utterly indefensible, unlawful, absurd, and which will admit of no excuse.

But as to the second, viz. the *solemn vow and obligation* under which the sureties lay themselves, to this you largely speak, and tell me, "It is a gross mistake to imagine that the promises, there made by the sureties concerning the future faith and practice of the child, are made in their own name; as if they engaged thereby, that when it is grown up, it shall actually believe all the articles of the Christian faith, shall renounce the Devil and all his works, &c. whereas, the Church considers these answers as the Child's answers, only made by its representatives: they contain its part of the baptismal covenant, or contract; which, because, by reason of its tender age, it cannot itself utter, is uttered by its sureties."* But, if this be, Sir, a gross mistake, the most celebrated of your own writers have led us into it. "The sureties in baptism," says your learned Dr. Nichols, † "religiously engage for the faith of the baptised,—that they shall sincerely believe all that is revealed in the Gospel, and shall direct the subsequent actions of their lives by the laws of Christ." A cloud of witnesses, I believe, can be brought, from the doctors of your church, whose judgment is the same. But no wonder the learned differ in so mysterious a point. You go on, and affirm, "That the sureties are by the Church, considered, in this affair, no otherwise than as the mouth of the child. You see, Sir,

* Letter I. page 31. † Nichols's Defence, &c. Part II. p. 273.

" here

“ here are no promises, nor engagements, which
 “ any besides the child are supposed to enter into,
 “ and to be bound by. Read over the office of
 “ public baptism, you will not find, I assure you,
 “ any promises, or stipulations, at all made by the
 “ sureties in their own name: I mean any that
 “ are explicit.”* But this account of the matter
 is to me very dark and obscure, and seems rather
 to strengthen than remove our objections. For,

First, it represents the Church as acting a very
 extraordinary and unaccountable part; viz. as
 receiving a child to baptism on account of its own
 faith and its own promise, uttered by sureties,
 when, at the same time, it knows the child neither
 does, nor can, either promise or believe any more
 than the font at which it is baptised. It considers
 the child as actually covenanting and contracting,
 yea, as the only covenanting and contracting party
 in this solemnity, when it knows it to be absolutely
 incapable of either. It represents the Church
 as very solemnly asking the child, “ Dost thou be-
 “ lieve? Wilt thou be baptised? Dost thou for-
 “ sake the Devil?” &c. when it is fully persua-
 ded of its utter inability to believe, or resolve, or
 will, any thing about it. Now, when a Deist
 stands by, and sees a learned and grave divine
 thus asking, and talking, and covenanting, with a
 child, can you wonder, Sir, if he smiles, and mer-
 rily treats the whole transaction as a jest?

“ The answers,” you say, “ are considered by
 “ the Church as only the answers of the child, and
 “ contain its part of the baptismal covenant; which
 “ because, by reason of its tender age, it cannot it-
 “ self utter, is to be uttered by its sureties.” That
 is to say, the child thinks, but cannot speak. It
 really covenants, contracts, promises, but not being
 able, by reason of its tender age, to utter its good
 intentions, these sureties are its mouth to utter
 them for it. But why, good Sir, its mouth to
 speak for it, and not its understanding also to think
 for it, its will to promise for it, and, indeed, its
 soul, and its very self to covenant and contract for
 it? Is not the child by reason of its tender age, as

* Letter I. pages, 31, 32.

absolutely

absolutely incapable of covenanting as it is of uttering? of contracting as it is of speaking? If the surety, therefore, does one of these good offices for it, he undoubtedly does the other also. But,

Secondly. If there be, as you say, no promises nor engagements which any but the child are supposed to enter into, or to be bound by, the consequence is extremely plain, that then there are no promises, nor engagements entered into at all for its religious education. For, the child surely does not engage for its own religious education. If the sureties, therefore, do not enter into any promise of this kind, it evidently follows, that there are no express engagements entered into by any one for the child's education. And thus, behold, your boasted double security turns out at last to be no security at all! But a surety not bound! a sponsor promising nothing! a security unengaged! This is language, which, in the mercantile, whatever it may be in the scholastic, line of life, would be absolutely unintelligible. And, to retort your own instance, my lawyer I should think a very wrong headed man, who should pretend to lend my money upon a double security, and make a merit of so doing, when at the same time, he confessed there were no promises, nor engagements, by which either of the securities were explicitly bound.

To be plain, Sir: as for this business of a child's believing, promising, covenanting, by representative, or proxy, I cannot but think a gentleman of your penetration will easily perceive it to be a thing absolutely inexplicable, impossible, and absurd; a thing utterly repugnant to reason and common sense, and without the least shadow of foundation in the Christian religion. For, if, by the constitution of the gospel-covenant, a child may believe, repent, vow, promise, and contract, by proxy, he may also, no doubt, be saved or be damned by proxy. But, into what a jest will this turn the religion of Christ?

As for the antiquity of this practice, sponsors in baptism, you have the good sense and ingenuity
not

not to pretend it was ever known, or so much as thought of, in the primitive apostolic church. Tertullian, who lived about *anno Dom.* 200, is the first, I apprehend, of all the Christian writers, that makes any mention of them. Nor does it at all follow from what he says, that these sponsors were any other than the parents of the child. Justin Martyr, who wrote fifty years before him, when he particularly describes the method and form of Christian baptism in his days, says not a single word of any such persons.*

But we learn, from St. Austin, about the year 390, (one of the earliest of the Christian writers in which any mention of them is found), when, and upon what occasion, these sponsors were admitted. "A great many," says he, "are offered to baptism, not by their parents, but by others, as infant slaves are sometimes offered by their masters. And, sometimes, when the parents are dead, the infants are baptised, being offered by any who can afford to shew this compassion to them. And sometimes infants, whom their parents have cruelly exposed to be brought up by those who light on them, are now and then taken up by the holy virgins, and offered to baptism by them who have no children of their own, nor design to have any."—These are Austin's† own words. Observe now Dr. Wall's‡ ingenuous confession on them, (and the good Doctor, you know, was never partial in favour of Dissenters, but a severe remarker on them :) "Here we see the ordinary use then was, for parents to answer for the children: but yet, that it was not counted so necessary as that a child could not be baptised without it."

Hence then, it is plain that parents never were set aside when they were capable and willing to offer their children for baptism, and that sponsors were admitted only in cases of parents incapacity; and, in all such cases, Dissenters also use them.

* Vide Lord King's Enquiry, Part II. pages 67, 68.

† Epist. ad Bonifac. ‡ Hist. Inf. Bap. Vol. I. page 196.

Why, now, I beseech you, Sir, in defiance of this acknowledged usage and practice of the ancient Church, as well as of common sense, does your Church severely decree, "That no parent shall be urged to be present at his child's baptism, nor be admitted to answer as Godfather for it?" What! would the parents standing forth together with the sponsors, and promising jointly with them, at all detract from this solemnity, or render it less effectual to secure the child's religious education? It is most evident it would not, and that your practice in this point is undoubtedly an innovation, and unreasonable and arbitrary deviation from the usage and institution of the primitive apostolic Church, an absurdity very generally acknowledged, and complained of, by the members of your Church, though not attempted to be reformed.

"But, by this institution of godfathers and godmothers," you say, "your Church affords its members some great and special advantages towards growing in grace and goodness above what are found amongst us:" and you tell me, "you lay a great stress upon it, as a wise, and useful, and necessary, institution."* But, did you not consider, Sir, that you were highly reflecting upon the wisdom and goodness, not of the holy apostles only, but also of your great Lawgiver Jesus Christ? How came it to pass that the great founder of the Christian Church never happened to think of these special advantages for growth in goodness and holiness? You do not pretend it to be an institution of Jesus Christ's, and yet are not afraid to call it a wise, an useful, and even a necessary institution. Strange! that Christ, *in whom were hid all the treasures of wisdom*, and who loved the Church so as to *lay down his life for it*, should not know this institution to be so especially advantageous and necessary to the growing goodness of his Church; or that, knowing it to be so, he should unkindly omit it; and that we are obliged to the superior wisdom and goodness of after-

* Letter I. pages, 58, 59.

ages for supplying this defect. It has usually been thought, that the apostles declared the *whole counsel of God*, and *kept back nothing from the Church which was profitable to it*; and that the Scriptures are a *perfect rule*; but this, it seems, is not true: you have discovered it, Sir, to be not true: for here you shew us a wise, an useful, and a necessary institution, which they really kept back; and which, had it not been for the superior sagacity and discernment of their successors, the Church had been so unhappy as never to have known. Into what mazes men plunge themselves when they deviate from the truth!

Of the same temerity you are guilty, when treating of another institution of your Church, Confirmation, and glorifying over us in the want of it, you observe, "Another administration of our Church is Confirmation: this, you know, you have wholly discarded: and, surely, you will be obliged to acknowledge you have lost thereby a very great advantage,—greatly conducive to future holiness of life."* Yes, Sir, this we will freely own, when you also will acknowledge that you are wiser than the apostles, and can better judge what is *conducive to holiness*, and to the *advantage of the Church*, than its great Lawgiver Jesus Christ. Had this ceremony of confirmation been really of great advantage, and conducive to holiness, it is very strange that neither Christ, nor his apostles, should have ordained it. That it is an apostolic institution you have not so much as attempted to prove, unless Calvin's conjecture must be admitted as proof.

The text usually urged for it, (Acts viii. 14.) I presume you are fully sensible has no weight. Peter's and John's going down to Samaria to pray, and *laying their hands* on those whom Philip had baptised. is, surely, no precedent, no direction, no institution, nor command, for our bishops to do likewise. For, the end for which the apostles did it, it is expressly said, (ver. 15, 17,) was, *that they might receive the holy Ghost*, i. e. its miraculous

* Letter I. page, 61.

gifts ; and they prayed for them, and laid their hands on them, and they received the Holy Ghost. That it was the miraculous gifts (such as prophesying, speaking with tongues, &c.) to form them into a Church, cannot be disputed, because they were something visible and obvious to the sense ; something which struck the wonder and ambition of the wicked forcerer ; for, it is said, *when Simon saw, that through laying on of the apostles hands, the Holy Ghost was given, he offered them money.*—Besides, as Dr. Whitby justly observes, if they laid not their hands on all who were baptised, it makes nothing for confirmation ; if they did, then Simon Magus also was confirmed, and received the Holy Ghost, which you will by no means admit.

It was, then, to give the newly-baptised converts, at Samaria, the miraculous gifts of the Holy Spirit, that Peter and John went and laid their hands on them. But, do our bishops, Sir, pretend that, by their praying and laying on of hands, the Holy Spirit is given ? Do they not disclaim any powers of this kind ? Seeing, then, they make no pretensions to the end, why, with such solemnity, do we see them practising the means ? Might they not as well stretch themselves upon the dead body of a child, in imitation of Elisha ; or, make ointment with spittle, for the cure of the blind, in imitation of our Saviour ; as pray and lay their hands on those who were baptised, in imitation of Peter and John, who did this to the Samaritan converts only, that they might receive the miraculous gifts and powers of the Holy Spirit ?

“ As for the open and solemn renewal of the
 “ baptismal covenant before God and many wit-
 “ nesses, which, you say, baptised persons ought
 “ to make when they come to years of discretion :”
 this they make, with us, in the other sacrament of the supper ; which Christ himself has appointed, and which is the only institution his wisdom has thought fit to appoint for this purpose.

But to speak freely, Sir, this ceremony of con-
 E firmation

firmation, as it is at present appointed and practised in your Church, is so far from being greatly conducive to holiness of life, that there is great reason to apprehend it may be productive of quite different, and even dangerous, consequences, by cherishing in men's minds false and presumptuous hopes, or by deluding them into wrong notions as to the safety of their state, and the terms of acceptance and favour with God.

By the order of your Common Prayer, *All persons baptised, when they come to competent years, and are able to say the Lord's Prayer, Creed, and Ten Commandments, and the Answers of the short Catechism, are to be brought to confirmation.* The bishop having asked, "Whether they renew" the solemn promise and vow which was made in "their names in baptism, &c.—upon their answering, *we do*, he proceeds, hereupon, to declare in the most solemn manner, even in an address to God himself, *that he has vouchsafed to regenerate these his servants by water and the Holy Ghost, (note, not by water only, but also by the Holy Ghost,) and to give them the forgiveness of all their sins;* and, laying his hand upon the head of each particular person, he certifies *him, by that sign, of God's favour and gracious goodness towards him.*

I pray you, Sir, in the name of God, inform me, what warrant has the bishop to pronounce a man's sins all forgiven, and himself regenerated by the Holy Ghost, upon no other grounds than his being able to say the short catechism, and declaring that he stands by his baptismal engagements? Will you say that this is the Christian doctrine concerning the terms of acceptance and forgiveness with God? Are good vows and resolutions, declared in the Church, infallible or proper proofs of a regeneration by the Holy Ghost? Is a man's professing that he repents, and promising that he will live godly, that actual repentance and amendment of life which alone can ensure the divine pardon and favour? Are there not multitudes

rudes who call Christ their Lord, and publicly profess to stand by their baptismal covenant, whom, however, he will reject with abhorrence at last? You will inform me, then, Sir, how the bishops, upon this mere profession and promise, presume to declare to Almighty God, and to assure the person, that he is regenerated, forgiven, and unquestionably in a state of favour with heaven!

The expressions, you must acknowledge are couched in strong and absolute terms: nor do I find that there is any intimation that their forgiveness depends upon their care to keep, and to live up to, their baptismal engagements. No: but, though their whole life hath hitherto been scandalously corrupt, yet, upon their being able to say *the Lord's prayer*, &c. the bishop solemnly pronounces a most absolute pardon over them, appeals to Almighty God that he hath forgiven them all their sins, and, lest this should be too little to satisfy the doubting sinner and appease his upbraiding conscience, he lays his hand upon his head, and certifies him by that sign, of God's favour and goodness towards him.

This bishop, Sir, the multitudes, who come to be confirmed, are taught to consider as an ambassador of Christ, a successor of the apostles, and a special minister of God. When they hear, then, this sacred person so solemnly declaring that they are fully justified, pardoned, and regenerated, by the Holy Ghost, can you blame them if they believe it, and rest satisfied that their souls are in a safe and happy state? And, as full remission of sins and the favour of God are to be had on such easy terms, can you wonder, should you see thousands eagerly flocking from all quarters to accept it? or, that persons of very vile and profligate characters should often thrust themselves in to partake of this benefit, and be seen receiving, upon their knees, episcopal absolution, and solemn assurances of God's favour and grace?

You know the aptness of mankind to deceive themselves with false hopes, and to substitute good purposes, professions, and vows, in the place of real

repentance and amendment of life. You also know, Sir, (and have no doubt, often declared it from your pulpit,) that this is one of the chief hindrances of men becoming truly good.—Now, should your office for confirmation be found thus plainly and directly tending to cherish these false hopes, you must excuse me if I believe, that, so far from its conducing to holiness of life, it greatly tends to promote that self-deception which is so fatal to the souls of men.

Let me farther ask you, Sir, on this head, is it any breach of charity to suppose, that, amongst the vast crowds which present themselves on such occasions, there are often many whom God, who knows their hearts, knows to be persons of a corrupt and wicked mind, and to be still under the power and tyranny of sin? Can the good bishop himself, in any judgment of charity, suppose there are not some such amongst the thousands he confirms? Candidly tell me then, Sir, upon what grounds he absolutely, and without reserve, declares to the eternal God, concerning them all, that he hath fully forgiven these his servants, when God at the same time knows many of them not to be his servants, and that he hath not at all forgiven them? Upon what grounds does he lay his hand on each individual person to assure him of God's favour and of his regeneration by the Holy Ghost, when, in truth, some of those, whom he thus assures, are absolute and entire strangers to the renewing influences of God's spirit, and fast bound in their sins? To me it appears, I do not say a very shocking, but, I must say, a very unaccountable, solemnity; and I should be glad to know how to reconcile it to the reverence you owe to God, or to the faithfulness and charity due to the souls of men.

Near a kin to this, but of a still more obnoxious nature, is another office of your Common Prayer: the absolution of the sick. To this you know Dissenters have always strongly objected, as too much resembling the solemn tricks of the Church of Rome, by which they pretend to send men to hea-

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ven without real amendment and holiness of life. But this you very prudently pass over in perfect silence: for, what, indeed, could even so ingenious an advocate offer on so extremely absurd and indefensible a point?

Being come to the sick person, (no matter what, or how wicked, his former life hath been,) the priest is directed, after some pious exhortations, to examine *Whether he believe the articles of the Apostles' creed, and truly repent him of his sins, and be in charity with all the world: and to move him to make a special confession of his sins, if he feel his conscience troubled with any weighty matter.* After which confession, the priest is ordered to absolve him (if he humbly and heartily desire it) after this sort:—

Our Lord Jesus Christ, who hath left power to his Church to absolve all sinners who truly repent and believe in him, of his great mercy forgive thee thine offences: and, by the authority committed to me, I absolve thee from all thy sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

The form is extremely solemn, and the matter of the last importance. You had need, therefore, be sure you go upon good grounds, lest you be found to trifle with the name of God, even in things of everlasting moment, and to acquit those whom he abhors. Permit me, Sir, in this great name, and before the world to demand of you,

1. What Church is it, and where is the Church found, to which Christ has left this high authority and power? Is it the Church of England, the Church of Scotland, the Church of France, or the Church of Rome? Do you here mean, by the Church, what your XIXth article hath defined it, viz. *The congregation of the faithful?*—Or, do you understand it as in your XXth article, where it is said to have *power to decree rites, and authority in matters of faith?* If so, I have shewn, in my former letter, that the Church is no other than the king and parliament of these realms. The king, indeed, has power to absolve all manner of sinners, penitent

penitent or not penitent ; and, by a single act of grace to vacate and set aside the censures and excommunications of all the bishops, archbishops, and clergy, of the land, and to restore the offender to the Church's bosom again ; to absolve, not in *foro civili* only, but in *foro ecclesiae* ; not in the state only, but also in the Church. But, whether the Kings, or Queens, of England do this by authority derived to them from Christ ; whether that Church of which they are declared the supreme heads, be the Church to whom this high power is given ; and whether they, as heads of it, have this power dwelling supremely and principally in them, so as what *they loose on earth*, is as certainly *loosed in heaven* as any thing that is *loosed* by any inferior members who officiate in the Church under them : — these are high points, which without your assistance, I shall not presume to settle. Be so good, Sir, as to let us know what Church upon earth it is to whom Christ has delegated this important authority, and where the charter, or grant, is found, by which he gave it the commission. But,

2. That Christ has given, can give, no such authority to fallible, uninspired, men, I should think absolutely out of doubt. Because, if he hath given power to any authoritatively to *absolve those who are truly penitent*, he must also have given them power to know *who are truly penitent* ; else it is a power to do nothing ; for, till they know them to be truly penitent, (i. e. till they can *search their hearts*,) they cannot authoritatively absolve them : but, if they cannot do it till then, they cannot do it at all. Besides,

3. If the priest has really this authority and power from Christ, the manner, in which he is here ordered to apply it, is most certainly wrong : for, upon the sinner's confessing his faults, and professing his faith and sincere repentance, the priest is ordered most solemnly and authoritatively to absolve him. But, are any promises, or professions, which a sinner makes in that distress, a proper ground for such an absolute authoritative absolution ? Are not the most profligate, when death is
thought

thought to approach, wont to feel their consciences troubled with many weighty matters, ready to confess their sins, to express the deepest remorse, and to vow amendment if spared? But, when the danger is past, is there one of a thousand that remembers his vows, and that returns not to his sins with as keen an appetite as ever? Do not you, gentlemen of the clergy loudly complain of this, when you press on your hearers the necessity of immediate reformation, and warn them not to trust to a death-bed repentance? But, notwithstanding all this, when a person of a profligate character sends for you in the time of sickness, and acknowledges his sins, and professes a repentance, of which he gave no signs till he believed himself to be arrested by death, if he desire absolution, you are directed and required, with all possible solemnity, even *in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost*, authoritatively to absolve him from all his crimes, how many or great soever they have been, and to declare him fully forgiven. Strange! that you can presume, in the name of Almighty God, to assure a man that he is absolved from all his sins, when, at the same time, you know yourselves NOT SURE that he is absolved! yea, when the only grounds of your doing it are only the same signs of repentance which a thousand sinners have given, who are, nevertheless, held fast under the power and guilt of sin! What would you call that man, who, in any temporal, or civil concern, should call heaven to witness to the certainty of that which he is not at all certain of? But is it less reproachful thus to trifle with things sacred and eternal? or is it less dangerous to practise the arts of collusion and deceit in that presence which is infinitely more awful than any tribunal upon earth?

I cannot say, Sir, in what light you view this order of your church, nor what obedience you pay it, but am humbly of opinion that it is this straining the sacerdotal character which has sunk it into some contempt; and that, if it continue thus strained, lower, much lower, it will continue to sink. For, when

when men see you claiming from God awful and high powers, which they are sure God has never given you, and hear you with great solemnity, authoritatively absolving a profligate sinner in his name, when, at the same time, they know he never gave you any authority so to do, how natural is it for them to deride the priestly character, on which these impious claims are founded, and to treat your other offices with ridicule and disrespect!

Having thus presented you with some of the true grounds of our dissent, many of which you have not at all, and the rest but slightly touched, in your three long letters, I shall now make some remarks on your attempts to reflect back our own pleas and objections upon ourselves, and to prove us self-condemned.

Here you complain, "that you walk almost without light,—that our churches are so secret in all their ways, that there is scarce any knowing what they are,—that you must grope and feel for them as in the dark,—and that you are something like one fighting with a ghost."* This seems, indeed, a very just description of your case, for you greatly misrepresent both our principles and our practice. But the blame of this darkness, Sir, be wholly to yourself. Are not our churches open? Are not our prayers, our sermons, our sacraments, and ordinations, performed in view of the world, that whoever pleases may come and see our manner of proceeding in them?

But, "we have no common rules of discipline and worship by which we hold ourselves obliged to walk; at least, none made public, and laid before the world, for your examination and discussion."† Yes, Sir, we have an excellent common rule of discipline and worship, by which all our churches *hold themselves obliged to walk*, even the same which Christ and his apostles, the great founders of the Christian Church, originally drew up, published and established, for it, and which they left as a common rule, the only perfect common rule, for

* Letter II. Page 4. † Ibid.

the use of all future ages, viz. the Holy Scriptures: this, therefore, you may discuss with all the freedom you please.

But to descend to some of the many instances in which you much misrepresent us. Your very great mistake, as to our imposing the posture of sitting at the Lord's supper, I have shewn in my former letter. You farther affirm, "That it is generally held amongst us, that the sacrament is for none but perfect and consummate Christians, such as can give a particular account of their conversion."* Here you walk, Sir, without light. There is not, I am persuaded, amongst the Dissenters, in the whole kingdom, a single Church, scarcely a single person, that hath this notion of the sacrament, that it is designed only for perfect Christians. We universally hold that every sincere Christian has a right to the Lord's table.

"As to the duty of fasting, you say, if you are not mightily deceived, it is thrown away amongst us. You have not met with any sermons, or treatises, of our ministers, shewing the obligations, and pressing its practice upon the people; nor have you ever heard of its being practised even by the strictest and devoutest amongst us."† You are, in truth, Sir, mightily deceived for one who sets up for so severe a censor of his brethren. Amongst many others, I refer you only to a most excellent discourse on fasting, in Bennet's Christian Oratory, Vol. II. which I am sure you cannot read without admiring it, blushing, and condemning your own temerity.

You are pleased to give us, also, a very grave and severe reprehension for standing and not kneeling, at our public prayers, and say, "It is little less than imposed upon our people, in so much, that, should any one presume to kneel in our churches, we should certainly censure and condemn him for it.†—That your church has as good right to impose kneeling, in the public

* Letter I. page 52.

† Letter I. pages 65, 66.

‡ Letter II. pages 65, 67.

"worship,

“ worship, upon her members, as Dissenters have
 “ to impose it upon their children and servants in
 “ family devotions.*—And that we always prac-
 “ tise it in private.”† You are extremely unhap-
 py, Sir, in your intelligence about this strange
 people, whom you have taken upon you to repre-
 hend. How came you to know what their posture
 of worship always is in private! Have they ta-
 ken you into their closets? For my own part, I
 pretend not to have been much with them at their
 secret devotions, and therefore will not pro-
 nounce with such assurance as you do upon the
 point, but am very strongly persuaded they prac-
 tise variously in this matter and do not always
 kneel.

As to their families and churches, though I have
 been present at prayers in a great number of both,
 (which you I presume, Sir, never have been,) I as-
 sure you I never once saw, nor heard any thing
 like the impositions you mention. In their family
 devotions, some stand, and some kneel, according
 as their inclination and convenience serve. And,
 in their public assemblies, many, I believe, over the
 whole kingdom, kneel at prayer, yet I may ven-
 ture to say, it never enters into the thoughts of
 their fellow worshippers to take the least offence at
 this.

You tell me, “ you can name a considerable
 “ congregation amongst us which is greatly scan-
 “ dalised,—and has taken a great and general of-
 “ fence at one of its member’s kneeling at public
 “ prayer.”‡ But, as in many other points, Sir, it
 is very notorious you have been ill served by your
 informers as to our customs and worship, you must
 give me leave to think that they have here also
 made too free with your credulity. That we have
 weak brethren amongst us, and those not a few,
 I am very ready to own. But a congregation, a
 considerable congregation too, so weak as to take
 a great and general offence at such a trifle as this!

* Letter I. page 28.

† Letter II. page 68.

‡ Letter II. page 68.

You must excuse me if I cannot easily admit it. I think you will do justice, Sir, to name the congregation, that it may either purge itself of the reproach, or stand corrected, before the world, for its unchristian and imposing temper, and learn to act more consistent with that liberty and right of private judgment, which, as Dissenters, they profess.

No, Sir, Dissenters are not for binding where God has left free. Our brethren of another Church are they who think themselves capable of mending Christ's institutions; and, not content to use them in the plainness and simplicity in which divine wisdom left them, must needs embellish and improve them by additions of their own.

Thus, for instance, kneeling at public prayers you very indiscreetly presume to represent as "a great improvement of public worship, and as adding a natural splendour and beauty to it;—that our worship is debased for want of it,—that kneeling is a more humble and honourable posture,—much more expressive of our profound reverence of God. And the humble posture of kneeling Nature itself so plainly dictates, and so powerfully prompts us to, that a man, if he were left to himself, whenever he makes his requests known to God, will hardly do it in any other, unless when some affected restraint is laid upon him."* How towering a flight! You do not pretend to say that either Christ or his apostles ever enjoined, or constantly, or mostly, used kneeling at public prayer. You mention several instances, from Scripture, where standing was the posture of some of the most solemn addresses to Almighty God:—*Abraham stood before the Lord*,† when he offered up that humble intercession for Sodom. Of the Levites and all the priests it is particularly recorded, that they stood up; and all the people are also called upon to stand up, and bless the Lord their God, in that solemn address to heaven, Nehem. ix. 2, 3, 4, 5; an address of

* Letter II. pages 66, 67, 69, 73. † Gen. xviii. 22.

deep humiliation confession, deprecation, and covenanting with God; one of the most solemn that stands upon sacred record. It is here no less than four several times expressly mentioned, that standing was the posture in which their worship was offered up. Moses and Samuel are represented as standing before God, when making their most humble and importunate intercessions with him: Jer. xv. 1. When our Saviour, in his parable, represents *two men praying in the temple*, standing is the posture in which he describes them: Luke xviii. 10, 11. Yea, he has himself, in express words, if not actually enjoined, yet most fully declared, his approbation of this gesture: Mark, xi. 25:—*When ye stand praying, forgive.* Finally the primitive Christians, it is acknowledged on all hands, every Lord's day, and at all other times between Easter and Whitsuntide, universally prayed standing, and never kneeled at their public devotions: (consequently by the way, not at the Lord's supper.) *Die Dominico nefas ducimus, &c.* says Tertulian.* *On the Lord's day we account it a sin to worship kneeling, which custom we also observe from Easter to Whitsuntide.*—With all this evidence glaring full in your face, Sir, you have the assurance, shall I call it, or does it deserve some other name, very smartly to reprehend us for standing at our public prayers, and to call it a debasement of our worship,—to affirm that kneeling is a more humble and honourable posture, much more expressive of our profound reverence of God, a great improvement of public worship, and that it adds a natural beauty and splendour to it. Surprisingly enthusiastic! What, did Abraham, and Moses, and Samuel, and Nehemiah, and all the priests, and Jewish people, debase the divine worship, when they stood before God, and made their solemn addresses to him! Yea, did Christ himself, too, debase it by directing men to stand praying!

Had you happened, Sir, to have been of the council of the apostles, you could have helped them

* De Coron. Milit. page 340.

to establish Christian worship upon a greatly improved, a more beautiful and perfect plan; and have enjoined this more humble and honourable posture, this additional splendour and beauty, to public prayer, which it never came into their minds to enjoin upon the disciples. But, as our Bibles at present stand, and God and Jesus Christ have left us at full liberty to offer up our prayers either standing or kneeling, you will excuse us if we are not so struck with your additional beauty as to give ourselves up blindfold to its charms.

But, it seems, we are inconsistent in condemning some of your ceremonies, while, at the same time, we readily conform ourselves to others: yea, while many ceremonies are allowed and practised among ourselves. "Such, you aver, we have, though we seem not to know it; such as uncovering our heads when we enter either your churches or our meetings."* But you are still "walking in the dark," Sir, as you justly represent yourself, "and encountering with ghosts." The Dissenters have no such custom of uncovering their heads when they enter into their meeting places, unless in time of worship; no notion of paying reverence to timber and walls; no ministers amongst them who have sense or grace enough to consecrate a piece of ground; and, when they use this ceremony at entering your churches, it is, I assure you, purely as a civil, not at all as a religious, ceremony; a compliment paid not in the least to the building, but entirely to our good brethren, whom we would not needlessly offend.

"Kneeling at Ordination," the next ceremony you mention, though generally used amongst us, was never, I believe, imposed. If the person to be ordained scrupled that posture, he would without all doubt, be permitted to stand.

As for "the secret ceremonies which you suspect, but will not positively affirm, to pass at striking the covenant betwixt us and our pastors," which you once and again mention, let

* Letter III. page, 7.

your suspicions, on that head, Sir, give you no further pain. I assure you I neither know, nor have ever heard of, any such covenanting now practised amongst us ; and I am persuaded, that, of all our Churches, not one in five hundred observes any such thing.

“ In balance against your surplice, you put “ what you call the ceremony of our *long sweeping cloak*.”* But the least attention would have shewn the two cases to have been far from parallel. Our ministers are at full liberty either to use or disuse the one : are yours so as to the other ? Did you ever hear of any learned pious pastors amongst us silenced, rejected, and cruelly imprisoned, for refusing the sweeping cloak ? But, have you never heard of your Hoopers, Sampsons, Humphreys, and a hundred other ministers, men of distinguished learning and usefulness in your Church, who have been swept from their stations in it ; silenced, confined, and grievously harrassed, only for scrupling your surplice and cap ? Have you never heard of many churches forsaken and shut up, in London, and of numerous congregations, both in city and country, deprived for a long while of sacraments and public worship by the rigorous imposition of your habits on their ministers ? And, if the most celebrated divine were now to offer to officiate in any of your Churches, but refused to wear a surplice, must he not, by your canons, be set aside and refused ? Had the cloak, which our fore-fathers frequently wore, but which is now I believe very generally disused, been the occasion of a thousandth part of the distractions and confusions in our Church as your surplice has been in yours, and driven so many worthy persons from their ministry and livings in it, they would have had the grace, I hope, immediately to have doomed it to the flames.

But “ the giving the Christian name in baptism, to the person baptised, you very seriously “ urge as another solid argument of ceremonies

* Letter III. page 42.

“ amongst

“ amongst us,” and ask, “ Is it not an addition to the sacrament ? Is it not an imposition ? ”* You add, “ Now I see you smile. ”* Excuse me, Sir, I could not help it. Your argument is quite new, and really surprised me with its solidity of weight. Yes, Sir, I own it an addition, an imposition, and a very ridiculous one too. And should any minister of ours pretend to add, or to impose, this ceremony upon his people, and forbid them to call the child by its name till it was baptised, you may be assured he would soon meet with the disregard and contempt his impertinence deserved. When you baptise adult persons, do you give their names in that ceremony ? or do you not only call them by names before given ? The same, I apprehend, is the case as to children amongst us.

As for the ceremonies in marriage, these, you justly observe, we consider only as civil ceremonies, and the priest as a civil officer, appointed by the magistrate to officiate in this affair. And, whatever decent rites the magistrate prescribes in matters of a civil nature, we think it our duty reverently to observe. But, “ the magistrate prescribe ! ” you with astonishment reply. “ For God’s sake, how does the magistrate here prescribe the rites and ceremonies of marriage, more than the other rites and ceremonies of the Church ! ”* But could not a gentleman of your discernment perceive a difference here ? Is the form of marriage any where instituted by our Saviour ; or a part of Christian worship, as baptism and the Lord’s supper are ? May we not, therefore own the power of the civil magistrate to appoint rites and forms for the celebration of the one, but not so as to the other ! By prescribing the forms of marriage, the magistrate acts in character, and rules in his own kingdom ; but by authoritatively prescribing rites in baptism and the Lord’s supper, we humbly apprehend he extends his power beyond the sphere assigned him, and attempts to rule in Christ’s kingdom ; and that, therefore, here we are to obey God rather than man.

* Letter III. page 10.

† Letter III. page 6.

You farther ask with surprise, “ What! civil ceremonies in the Church of God, in the midst of the administration of a divine institution, intermixed with pastoral exhortations, holy prayers, solemn benedictions !” *—But why, Sir, so astonished? Did you never take an oath in a civil court of judicature? And did not the person who administered this sacred rite give you a pastoral exhortation, accompanied with a holy prayer and a solemn benediction, piously invoking on you God’s blessing and help? And, as to the place which you call the church of God, where marriage is solemnized, you must have known, that the consecration of timber and the sanctity of walls are points too sublime for the understandings of Dissenters; and that, in their opinion, all places are alike holy, and that no building on earth merits the high honour of being called the Church of God.

The same reply we make as to the ceremonies of burial, our compliance with which you also briskly retort upon us. Is the burial of the dead, Sir, a Christian institution? any part of the religion, or worship of Christ? Is it not purely a political, or civil thing? Yes: and as such only we view it: and consider the person who officiates as one appointed to this office, directed, instructed, and maintained, by the state.

But, as you are here professedly “ answering our great and popular objections,” how came you, Sir, to pass over, in profound silence, one of the greatest, and most popular, to this office of burial? which objection, indeed, has not been made by us only, but also by some of the most illustrious members of your own church. I presume you were conscious that the passages objected to were incapable of defence, and therefore you wisely overlooked them.

There are but three cases, you know, Sir, in which your Church refuses this solemn office of burial, viz. to those who die unbaptised, to self-murderers, and to those who are under sentence

* Letter III. page 6.

of the greater excommunication. As for all other persons who are brought to the church-yard, it very strictly commands you, even under pain of suspension, by canon LXVIII. that you use over them the form prescribed by the Common Prayer. Now, hence it comes to pass, that, over some of the most abandoned and profligate of mankind; over men who have been cut down in a course of open impiety by a sudden and untimely death; or who even fell by the hand of Justice for some black and atrocious crime; over these, I say, your Church, and I say it WITH ASTONISHMENT, directs and commands you most solemnly to declare,—*That Almighty God, of his great mercy, has taken to himself the soul of this your dear brother. You give God hearty thanks that it hath pleased him to deliver him out of the miseries of this sinful world: and you pray God, that, when you yourselves shall depart out of this life, you may rest in Christ, as your hope is this your brother doth.* This is what your Church commands you solemnly to say over every person brought to be buried, the three above-mentioned cases excepted. So that, if a man had been guilty of murder, and, when brought to the gallows for this heinous crime, dies an impenitent hardened wretch, yet, concerning him, you are to declare that *Almighty God hath, in his great mercy, taken him to himself, though he died a victim to public justice, and was taken away in wrath.* You are to give God hearty thanks that he hath taken this your brother out of the miseries of this sinful world, though you have the strongest reason to believe that he is gone down to realms of greater misery below. And you are to profess, before God, that you hope the man rests in Christ, and pray that you yourselves may rest in Christ in the same manner as this your brother doth, even though you have every reason to believe that he died in his sins, and is therefore not gone to be with Christ, where nothing that is defiled can ever be admitted. Strange! and extremely shocking! What can the people think, Sir! what must Infidels

dels and Deists think! when they hear you in the morning denouncing, from the Scriptures, *Indignation and wrath, tribulation and anguish, on every soul of man that doeth evil*, and assuring them, that, *without holiness, no man shall see the Lord*; but, in the evening, shall hear you, from the Common Prayer, declaring, before God, your hope of the eternal happiness of one of the most debauched and profligate men in your parish; and applying to him such lofty expressions of confidence and hope, as can be applicable only to a person of the most shining and exemplary life.

Do you imagine, Sir, people do not think? Can you wonder Deism prevails? that the priesthood is ridiculed? and that your good sermons are not more effectual to reform a corrupt world? To me (and, doubtless, to thousands of your own church) this appears to be a most indecent prostitution of your sacred character and office, a trifling and prevarication with things of everlasting moment, and laying a fatal snare in the way of many, who, seeing their debauched neighbour dismissed to the other world with such confidence of his good estate, suppress their just fears, and say, *I shall have peace, though I add drunkenness to thirst.**

But there is a farther very strange and extraordinary circumstance attending this matter, viz. that it involves the Church in a manifest contradiction and absurdity; for, it damns and saves the same individual persons. Whom it damns when living it saves when dead. Arians and Socinians, you know, Sir, your Church declares *without doubt to perish everlastingly*. But let these very men die, and your Church as solemnly declares that *God hath, in his great mercy taken them to himself, and that it hopes they rest in Christ*; or,

* Two of our most eminent archbishops, Drs. Sancroft and Tillotson, have expressed their strong disapprobation of some parts of this office, the former of whom declared, "that he was so little satisfied with it, that, for that very reason, he never took any pastoral charge upon him." Vide Calamy's Defence of moderate Nonconformity. Part II. page 222.

in other words, that the man whom I pronounce without doubt to be damned, I yet hope that he is saved; i. e. I hope without hope.

I shall press you no farther on this point, but proceed to your next observation, in which you endeavour to establish not only the use, but the Church's divine right, of making ceremonies from the instance of the holy kiss.* "The kiss of charity, used in the apostolic Church, you ask, was it a rite of divine appointment, or was it not?" I answer, that I apprehend this kiss of charity cannot properly be called a divine institution, nor be said to be ordained by the apostles. The greeting with a kiss was an ancient established usage, not only amongst the Jews, but the Gentile nations also. This usage, therefore, or ceremony, was not ordained by the apostles, but only, by their advice, regulated and directed to a moral and religious end. It is as if they had said, "It is your custom, when you meet, to salute each other with a kiss; see that it be a pure, a chaste, or holy kiss, a token of unfeigned charity, friendship, and peace."

"But, if this ceremony of the holy kiss was not of divine appointment, (which probably, you say, is the truth of the case,) but a merely ecclesiastical prudential institution, ordained by the apostles without any precept from the Lord, or any particular direction of the Holy Spirit:" then, Sir, I, without the least hesitation, say, it was not at all obligatory as a law upon the consciences of Christians: they might, or they might not, practise it, without sinning against God. Even the apostles had no dominion over the faith and practice of Christians but what was given them by the special presence and spirit of Christ, the only Lawgiver, Lord, and Sovereign, of the Church. They were to teach only the things which he should command them. Whatever they enjoined, under the influence of that spirit, was to be considered and obeyed as the injunction of Christ.

Christ. But, if they enjoined any thing in the Church, (which I can by no means admit,) without the peculiar influence and direction of this spirit, (i. e. merely as fallible unassisted men,) in that case their injunctions had no authority over conscience: every man's own reason had authority to examine and discuss their injunctions, and, as they approved themselves to his private judgement to observe them, or not. Should we grant, then, what you ask, "That the Church, in the present age, has the same authority and power as the Church in the apostolic age, considered as not being under any immediate and extraordinary guidance of the Holy Ghost?"—What will you gain by it? This same authority, and power, is, you see, Sir, really no power nor authority at all.

I proceed next "to the point of discipline, the want of which, you say, is objected to your Church; but you will represent the real state of it, and then shew that we really as much want it ourselves."* We will attend to your own account of it, which cannot be suspected of being too severe. You acknowledge "that the discipline of the Church is of great moment towards the edification of its members; and that the fault is unpardonable when Church governors let it fall, through a supine carelessness and neglect:—that there is a great prostration of discipline in the Church of England:—that it is ruined amongst you:—that the distempers of the times are evidently too strong for it:—that those who sit at the helm find it prudent not to bear up too much against the impetuosity of the storm, but to give way till the madness of the people be still:—That the discipline of the Church has not been carried to any degree of perfection, and now lies under a general relaxation:—That your people are often indulged in all their unreasonable demands and disorderly ways, to prevent their putting in execution their threats, 'that they will go to the meet-

* Letter III. page 12.

ing:—and, finally, that you have at least the
 “ shadow and form of discipline, and trust in God
 “ that *these dry bones will one day live.*”*

This, it must be owned, is very ingenuously
 and frankly spoken. And can you blame then the
 Dissenters, Sir, for joining themselves to Churches
 where that godly discipline is observed, which you
 confess to be of such great moment to the edifica-
 tion of Christian people, and which your Church
 is continually wishing for, but never attempts to
 have restored. But here you retort, and inti-
 mate as great a want of discipline amongst us.
 “ What, are there no scandalous sinners, you
 “ ask,† no fornicators, adulterers, extortioners,
 “ &c. received into your Churches! I must beg
 “ your pardon if I demur upon this. For, I could
 “ never perceive the doors of the meeting were
 “ ever shut against any. And, if such profligate
 “ persons be not admitted to *sit at the Lord’s*
 “ *table*, they need not fear being admitted to all
 “ other parts of your worship.” And is not this,
 Sir, exactly right? Ought not our church-doors
 to be always kept open, that whoever will may
 come, and be witness to our way of worship. Such
 profligate persons, therefore, may come, if they
 please, and hear their sins reprov’d, and be ex-
 hort’d to repentance and amendment of life.
 They are then where they ought to be, under the
 preaching of the word; the means appointed by
 God to convince and reclaim the profligate and cor-
 rupt. Were not the doors of the church at Corinth
 kept open, in the apostles’ days, for infidels to come
 in, and be present at their worship? Vide 1 Cor.
 xiv, 23.‡ But, to the table of the Lord, to par-
 take of the children’s bread, you seem convinced,
 that, in our Churches, such profligate persons are
 not suffered to come. And is not this the true or-
 der and discipline of the Christian Church? But
 is it the same, Sir, in your Church? Are not

* Letter III. pages 12, 13, 14, 17, 22, 28. † Ibid. page 23.

‡ If, therefore, the whole Church be come together into one place
 —and there come in those that are unlearned, or unbelievers,
 &c. &c. &c.

some

some of the most profane and abandoned of men, rakes, debauchees, blasphemers of God, and scoffers at all religion, often seen upon their knees around your communion-table, eating the childrens bread, and partaking of the holy elements, to qualify for a post? Dare your ministers refuse them? No! they dare not refuse the most impious blasphemer the three kingdoms afford, when he comes to demand it as a qualification for an office in the army or fleet, without exposing themselves to such vexatious and expensive suits at law as very few of the clergy would be either able or willing to undertake.

And, if in any other case, the priest denies the sacrament to the most infamous sinner dwelling in his parish, if the man, upon an appeal to the ecclesiastical court, can secure the favour of the lay-chancellor, he may securely defy both the minister and bishop to keep him from the Lord's table. The chancellor's determination shall stand in law, though contrary to the bishop's; and the minister liable to a suspension for refusing compliance, and even to excommunication itself if he be contumacious, and will not give the man the sacrament. How, Sir, do you reconcile this with your affirming, "That your parish priest has as much power as any presbyterian or congregational minister to repel open and scandalous sinners from the Lord's table?"* Or, how with your representing the lay-chancellor as a person only assumed by the bishop, not to do any act that is purely spiritual, but only to be his assistant in his ecclesiastical and judicial proceedings?†

It not the chancellor supreme and uncontrouled in his court, not liable to be restrained or directed by the bishop in his judicial proceedings? Does he not finally and absolutely determine on cases of excommunication, sovereignly direct who shall be received to, and who cast out from, Christian fellowship and worship at the table of the Lord? And is not this an act as purely spiritual, as impor-

* Letter III. page 33.

† Ibid. page 38.

tant and momentous, as any done in the Church? Must not his sentence take place without controul, and is the minister, in publishing it, any other than his servant, appointed by law to put it in execution?

Will you please to hear, Sir, the sentiments of a great prelate,* of your own Church, upon the point in debate? “ If there be any thing in the office of a bishop to be challenged peculiar to themselves, certainly it should be this; (speaking of excommunication;) yet this is in a manner quite relinquished to their chancellors. Laymen, who have no more capacity to sentence or absolve a sinner than to dissolve the heavens or the earth. And this pretended power of the chancellor is sometimes purchased with a sum of money. *Their money perish with them!* Good God! what a horrid abuse is this of the divine authority? But this notorious transgression is excused, as they think, by this, that a minister, called the bishop’s surrogate, but is indeed the chancellor’s servant, chosen, called, and placed there, by him, to be his crier, no better; that, when he hath examined, heard, and sentenced, the cause, then the minister, forsooth, pronounces the sentence. Just as if the rector of a parish church should exclude any of his congregation, and lock him out of the church; then comes the clerk, shews and jingles the keys, that all may take notice that he is excluded. And, by this his authority, the chancellor takes upon him to sentence not only laymen, but clergymen also, brought into his court, for any delinquency. And, in the court of Arches, sentence even bishops themselves.” “ I remember when the Bishop of Wells, hearing of a cause corruptly managed, and coming into court to rectify it, the chancellor, Dr. Duck, fairly and mannerly bid him be gone, for he had no power there to act any thing; and

* Dr. Croft’s, Bishop of Hereford, Naked Truth, &c. page 58.

“ therewithal

“ therewithal, pulled out his patent, sealed by
 “ this bishop’s predecessor, which frightened the
 “ poor bishop out of the court.” Behold ! this is
 the person, Sir, whom you have the courage to
 represent *as only assumed by the bishop, not to do*
any act that is purely spiritual, but only to be his
assistant in his judicial proceedings.

But, as we are now upon the head of discipline,
 and the law called the TEST is a battery which
 has beat down all its fences around your Church,
 and as you are a zealous advocate for that law,
 you will permit me here, Sir, to enlarge a little
 upon that point, and to ask, How can you bear to
 see the terrible desolation it has made of your god-
 ly discipline without resentment and grief? Can
 you be jealous, Sir, for the prosperity and honour
 of your Church, and yet patiently view it lying
 in this polluted and common state? its inclosures
 broken up, and a way opened, by law, for the
 most flagitious of men, for Atheists, professed
 Deists, and the most open and avowed sinners, to
 lie securely in its bosom, to be numbered and
 cherished amongst its holiest and most beloved chil-
 dren, and to be acknowledged before the world as
 honest and good Christians, by being suffered to
 come boldly to the table of the Lord?

But why do I say *SUFFERED*? Does not this
 Church, by the force of this law, even *compel them*
to come in? Many of the unhappy persons, con-
 scious of their unfitness, would gladly draw back.
 Knowing themselves, perhaps, either to disbelieve
 the truth, or else to live in open violation of the
 laws of Christianity, they are loth to add to their
 other crimes this prevarication with Almighty
 God, this affront to Jesus Christ, and thereby to
 run a dreadful risk of *eating and drinking judge-*
ment to themselves. But, their all lies at stake:
 they must qualify, or be given up to beggary and
 want. Away therefore with scruples ! They rush
 to the Lord’s table, and partake of the sacred ele-
 ments with consciences and characters all covered
 with guilt.

You will say, perhaps, it is their own fault;
 they

they might have refused to come. They might, indeed, if they would have lost their posts, their subsistence, their bread. But can the Church reasonably expect such sacrifices as these from men of corrupt minds? Is she then in no fault, in laying men under such strong, almost invincible, temptations to this odious hypocrisy and profanation of holy things? Is she not highly culpable for opening her bosom to receive men of impure characters to all the sacred privileges, liberties, and honours, which belong only to sincere Christians? Yea, for owning before the world, as worthy and good Christians, persons whom the world sees, and whom the Church herself cannot but see, to blaspheme the name of Christ, and to live in avowed contempt of his authority and laws?

And what relief, Sir, has the unhappy minister, of whom, as *steward in God's house*, it is required that he be found faithful, and who is hereafter to answer for his conduct to his great master? What relief, I ask, has he, when the veteran debauchee shall come and demand from him these pledges of Christian fellowship, and of God's paternal love? Truly, none at all. He must receive him, as a child of God and a dearly beloved brother, to the table of Christ, or have an action commenced against him, and be liable to damages amounting, perhaps, to much more than he is worth.

As much, therefore, as you are concerned for the honour of the church, and for the interest, reputation, and comfort, of its clergy, so much you ought to wish and zealously promote the repeal of this law; a law which, whatever was its original intention, hath, in its application, let in, like a floodgate, upon your Church the dregs of the human race: a law, which, though at first designed only the more effectually to prevent all danger to the constitution from Papists, hath, by an unnatural perversion of it, actually broken down all distinctions, established by divine authority, between sacred and profane; has thrust infidels and profligates into the *most holy places* of your temple, and brings Deists and *debauchees* to eat at the Lord's

table amongst the children of his house. Let me, ask you, Sir, in the name of Christ, our common master and judge, doth not this law, as now enforced, occasion the most notorious prostitution of a holy sacrament of his religion? Is not its avowed and open tendency and use to pervert an institution of our Saviour to ends, not only quite different from, but even opposite to, those for which he appointed it? Is it not making that a political instrument to divide Christians which Christ instituted as a religious instrument to coalesce and unite them? Must it not be highly odious and offensive to Almighty God to see a holy sacrament, which his wisdom hath ordained for spiritual and religious purposes only, thus prostituted, perverted, made an engine and tool of state, employed to strengthen and perpetuate differences amongst good Christians, and thereby debased, not to worldly only, but to much worse than worldly, ends?

As to myself, Sir, I assure you, though I think this law to be a most unrighteous restraint upon us, and an undoubted violation of our natural rights, yet I am far from being persuaded that its repeal would be of the least service to our interest as Dissenters. I have often doubted whether there be not too much truth in what you say, "That high trusts, public offices, and court-employments, would be extremely apt to corrupt us, and to make practical religion more visibly decay;" and that it would really rather injure than strengthen our interest. I have never, therefore, as a Dissenter, been at all solicitous for the repeal. No, Sir, so far from this, that, could I allow myself to hate and wish ill to the Church, I would most heartily wish it pertinaciously to hold fast this shameful corruption. I would wish it by no means to give up this open profanation of the authority and name of Christ, this prostitution and perversion of a holy sacrament of his religion, this destruction of all discipline, this open door for the reception of the most abominable and profane to its most holy mysteries and rites. This, if I wished

at ill, I would earnestly wish your Church inflexibly to continue; not doubting, but, if long continued, it will surely, at length, bring down upon it the heavy anger of Almighty God, the just resentment and jealousy of a despised and insulted Saviour, and the deep scorn and contempt of all wise and thinking men.

While this law continues, Sir, in its present application, yourself cannot but see that your discipline must necessarily remain most scandalously relaxed, and that it must soon be totally ruined. It is impossible you can maintain hardly the shadow and form, much less the spirit, of primitive ecclesiastical government. Your holy things must lie common, vilely trodden under foot. Of all persons in the land, therefore, the clergy should be the first to labour with all their might for the repeal of this unhappy law; a law which cannot but be supposed to bear hard upon, and grievously to wound, the consciences of many of them; and which subjects them to so servile a prostitution of their character as cannot but load it with great infamy and reproach.

You tell me,—“ That you will engage, *simple* “ *as you sit here*, that this law shall be repealed, “ and our incapacities removed, when we will lay “ down our enmity to the Church; that is, in “ short, to one half-part of the Constitution.— For, Church and state, here in England, are so incorporated and united, that they have, like the “ married pair, the same friends and enemies, and “ stand or fall together.”* I cannot pretend to say, Sir, how *simple you sat there* when you gave this assurance, but this I may say, that you would much more effectually serve your cause, were you able to stand up and make it good. For,

1. Are you sure that the Church is really any essential part at all, much less the half-part, of the British Constitution: or, that Church and State are so married and interwoven that they must stand or fall together? — Many, Sir, besides Dissenters, will think that this is a very partial and

* Letter I. page 11.

wrong representation of our most excellent frame of government. Let any one in his imagination annihilate the form of our present Church. Let him suppose its liturgy, clergy, articles, canons, with all its ceremonies and rites, entirely vanished from the land : its immense revenues applied in ease of our heavy taxes, and for the payment of the public debts, and preachers paid only by voluntary contributions, as they are amongst us. Would the state hereby sustain so essential a loss that it could not thenceforward possibly subsist ? What would the British Monarchy be overthrown, —our courts of judicature be shut up,—the courts of law be stopped,—parliaments no more meet,—commerce and trade stagnate,—because what you call a Church is no more ? Romantic and absurd ! No. The frame of our happy government, both civil and military, might remain the very same : and you will give me leave to observe, on the present occasion, that, in one part of this kingdom, those, who profess themselves to be of your Church as to its external polity and ceremonies, are almost to a man inveterate avowed enemies of our happy civil constitution, and have risen in an impious rebellion against his present majesty, and joined with Spaniards, French, Italians, and home-bred papists, in their wicked attempts to subvert the protestant religion and liberties.*

2. The destruction of the Church of England is what we by no means wish. May God in his mercy prevent it, by causing her to see, *in this her day, the things belonging to her peace.* We bear it no enmity, *God is our witness.* We wish it, from our souls, glory, prosperity, purity, peace : the glory of being formed according to the *perfect plan* of the primitive apostolic Church ; purged of those things, which yourselves know to be no parts of the religion of Christ ! We wish to see it established upon the Catholic and broad bottom, upon which alone it can stand firm, even the scriptural foundation of the apostles and prophets, Jesus Christ himself being its only Lawgiver and

* In the Rebellion, 1745.

King; and not upon the narrow basis on which it now rests, the articles and canons, the institutions and inventions, of fallible and weak men, on which it can never be strongly and firmly fixed; which are all, in the apostles language, *wood, hay, stubble; whose end is to be burnt.*

We wish, that, as it opens its bosom, and admits the most unworthy and licentious persons without demurring at their open violation of God's commands, so it would charitably extend its arms to take us into its communion, without insisting upon our obedience to the injunctions and commands of men. Finally, we wish, that what God, in his wisdom, hath been pleased to leave indifferent, your Church, also, in her wisdom, would be pleased to leave the same: that you would not attempt to mend the institutions of Jesus Christ, but would receive us into your Church upon the same terms and qualifications as Christ and his apostles would have received us into theirs, and as God will receive us into heaven at last. This, Sir, I assure you is all the harm we wish the Church: judge then yourself whether we bear it any enmity: and whether you are not now bound to take from us the incapacities which you engaged, *simple as you sat there*, should on this condition be removed.

And you will give me leave, Sir, to think, and to hope, that there are numbers of your worthy clergy of the same mind; that it would not at all lessen either the glory, stability, or prosperity, of your Church, if its bounds were thus enlarged to admit the moderate Dissenters, who sincerely desire so happy a coalition. Its enemies seem to multiply, and dark clouds to rise around it. Popery is making dangerous and mighty inroads on the one hand, and Deism on the other. There may come a time, as there formerly has been, when, the frame of your Church being terribly threatened, we may again be considered as no despicable auxiliaries. But, if we cannot be so happy as not to be cast out and rejected by our brethren, our consolation is this, that *God judgeth in the earth,*

earth, and will surely at the proper season, vindicate and plead the cause of the injured and oppressed.

But to return to the point of discipline. To the acknowledged irregularity of lay-chancellors in your Church, you would fain “ put in balance the “ lay-preaching, lay-praying, and lay-ordination, “ allowed in our churches.”* To which I reply, that in the generality of our Churches, there is no such thing allowed or ever practised. Besides, if they were, did not your own Church set us the pattern ! In the rubric, before the general confession at the communion, did it not direct, *Then shall this general confession be made, in the name of all those that are to receive, either by one of them, or else by one of the ministers ?* How it came to be omitted in the late editions of the Common Prayer, whether it is done according to law, or by authority of parliament, you, Sir, perhaps can say.

As to “ laymen being an essential part of all our “ consistories and synods, sitting in them, and having an equal vote with pastors in all business,— “ jointly with them suspending from the Lord’s “ table, &c.”† this, Sir, is no other than the scriptural apostolic plan. The aggrieved person is by our Lord, you know, (Matt. xviii. 17.) directed to lay his complaint before the Church, i. e. the congregation of the faithful ; and, if the offender neglected to hear the Church, (the congregation,) admonishing and reproving him, he was then to be considered as a heathen man and a publican. How was the corrupt member at Corinth to be solemnly excommunicated ? Not by any particular person, chancellor, or bishop, but it was to be the act of the whole Church, To the whole body, or congregation, of believers in that city, St. Paul gives directions, that, when they were come together, they should deliver such an one to Satan ; and, that they should put away from amongst themselves that wicked person, 1 Cor. v. 4, 5, 13, which excommunication

* Letter III. page 38.

† Ibid. page 37.

he afterwards calls a *punishment inflicted by the many*, 2 Cor. ii. 6. So in that weighty and momentous question,—How far the Gentiles were to submit to the law of Moses? the elders and brethren are joined with the apostles in the decision and decree, Acts xv. 23. The laity, therefore, have a right to be consulted, and to judge, in these important church-matters, together with the clergy, as they do, by their representatives, in what you call our consistories. But, with you, Sir, a single layman, (this is the absurdity which you seem willing to lose sight of,) I repeat it, a single layman, not only in distinction from, but in actual opposition to, the bishop, and all the Church, both clergy and laity, has authority to judge and determine these important matters; and excommunicates or absolves, shuts out or lets in, according to his sole pleasure.

And here, Sir, let me stop a moment, and review the point in debate between Dr. Watts and yourself. As for the lives of the Dissenters, though God knows we have nothing to boast of, but a great deal that calls for shame and humiliation, on this head; yet, whether we are quite so deeply immersed in the deluge of profaneness, immorality, and vice, which spreads over the land; whether the blasphemies and oaths, the debauchery, riot, and guilty excesses, which too generally prevail, be, in proportion to our number, found as rise amongst us as amongst the members of the established Church, must be left, and we freely leave it, to the impartial world to judge between us.

And, as to special obligations and advantages for holy living, which you contend strenuously with the Doctor to lie on your side, what hath been above observed on your several offices for confirmation, absolution of the sick, and burial of the dead, shews them I humbly think, to have really an ill aspect upon the morals of your people, a dangerous and apparent tendency to cherish in them false hopes, and to give them wrong notions of the terms of acceptance and of entrance into heaven. And, of the state in which your discipline

pline lies, (which you acknowledge to be of great moment to the edification of the church,) no enemy need to wish a more melancholy account than yourself have given of it. Upon the whole, therefore, Sir, I cannot think the worthy Doctor to deserve censure for attempting to rouse Dissenters from the languishing state of religion among them, by putting them in mind of the superior advantages they enjoyed, and of the peculiar obligations under which they manifestly lay to greater holiness of life.

You seem not a little displeased* at its having been urged as a reason for our dissent, "That your Church has shewn a persecuting spirit," and with some emotion ask, "Did the Church persecute at any time its own members? Were you, or your fathers, ever persecuted while they continued in the Church? And were they driven out of it by those persecutions?" I confess, Sir, you quite surprise me by such questions as these. What! are you only a stranger in Britain? and have never heard of the bitter sufferings of our worthy fathers the Puritans? With what silencings, deprivations, fines, imprisonments, and lingering and cruel deaths, for more than a hundred years, they were terribly harrassed and oppressed by your Church? Have you never read, with a bleeding heart, the unrelenting rigours of your Archbishops Parker, Bancroft, Whitegift Laud; under the first of whom, above a hundred, under the second, above three hundred, pious and learned men, not only members, but ministers, of your Church, were silenced, suspended, admonished, deprived; many of them loaded with grievous and heavy fines, and shut up in filthy jails, where they slowly expired through penury and want? And what were the crimes which drew this dreadful storm of episcopal vengeance on them? Nothing but their scruples about the surplice and the cap, about bowing at the name of Jesus, about Christ's descent into hell, and such like momentous points!

* Letter III. pages 60, 61.

Have

Have you never read, Sir, what desolations Laud brought upon our fathers, whilst yet in your Church? How many hundreds of them were sequestered, driven from their livings, excommunicated, persecuted in the high-commission court, and forced to leave the kingdom for not punctually conforming to all their ceremonies and rites, and not daring to tell their people that they might lawfully profane the sabbath by gambols and sports, and to publish from their pulpits the permission of the king to break the command of God? And yet you ask, "Were your fathers ever persecuted while they continued in the Church?"

Pray, what was it peopled the savage deserts of North America? Was it not the thousands of persecuted and oppressed families, who fled from tyrannizing bishops? Who, not being suffered to worship quietly in their native country, as their consciences directed, sought a peaceful retreat from the rage of their Fellow-Christians amongst more hospitable Indians. To omit a thousand acts of cruelty, is not the Act of Uniformity, which, to be sure you will call a grand pillar of your Church; a very unrighteous and persecuting act? Do not several of your canons breathe an unchristian and malevolent spirit? Did not your Church, at last, in a most arbitrary and unjust manner, cast out, at once, above two thousand of them, excellent and pious ministers, and abandon them and their starving families, to great poverty and distress? To heighten that distress, did not your Church, by another act, banish them five miles from any city, borough, or church, in which they had before served, and thereby put them at a cruel distance from their acquaintance and friends, who might minister to their relief? Did she not, by another act, forbid their meeting to worship God any where but in your own churches, under the penalties of heavy fines, imprisonments, and banishment to foreign lands?

In consequence of these unrighteous acts, were not vast numbers of pious clergymen, our forefathers, (once the glory of your Church,) with multitudes

titudes of their people, laid in prisons amongst
 thieves and common malefactors, where they suf-
 fered the greatest hardships, indignities, and op-
 pressions; their houses were rudely rifled, their
 goods made a prey to hungry informers, and their
 families given up to beggary and want? "An ef-
 "timate was published of near eight thousand
 "Protestant Dissenters who had perished in prison
 "in the reign only of Charles II. By severe pe-
 "nalties inflicted on them for assembling to wor-
 "ship God, they suffered in their trade and estates,
 "in the compass of a few years, at least two mil-
 "lions: and a list of sixty thousand persons
 "was taken who had suffered on a religious ac-
 "count betwixt the Restoration and the Revolu-
 "tion."* Behold! the groans and the blood of
 these oppressed puritans cry beneath the altar, *How*
long, O Lord! Yet you are deaf to all their
 groans; and with a stoical insensibility, you ask,
 "Were your fathers ever persecuted?"

"But the Presbyterian and Independent
 "Churches have each, in their day of power, dis-
 "covered as much, and indeed more of that spi-
 "rit."† Too much of that bad spirit it is acknow-
 ledged, they have each shewn. But, surely, there
 is no comparison between the cruelties and oppres-
 sions of your Church and of theirs. *Your little*
finger has been thicker than their loins.

But, whatever the Church may have been here-
 tofore, you affirm, it is not now of a persecuting
 spirit; and that there is not the least appearance
 of its having disquieted and oppressed any on
 account of religion for more now than half a
 century.‡ You had forgotten the famous
 Schism and occasional Conformity Acts, which,
 long since that date, much disquieted and oppressed
 us. The Test and Corporation Acts had also es-
 caped your memory, which, at this time, deprive
 us of valuable and important privileges, to which,
 as faithful subjects and members of the common-

* Vide Neal's Hist. Purit. Vol. IV. page 554.

† Letter III. page 61. ‡ Ibid.

wealth, we think we have a natural undoubted right.

The present governors of your Church, indeed, (thanks be to heaven for it!) are too wise, and too righteous, to permit persecution to rage against us. But to their clemency and justice, Sir, not to the kind and benevolent spirit and constitution of your Church, I humbly apprehend, we owe it, that we are not at this time severely persecuted and oppressed. If the act of Uniformity, which you will certainly call a grand pillar of your Church, is not a very unrighteous and persecuting act, yet several of your canons breathe, you know, Sir, a very cruel and intolerant spirit. By the former, "Whoever shall declare, or speak, any thing in the derogation, or depraving, of the book of Common Prayer, or any thing therein contained, or any part thereof, he shall, for the first offence, suffer imprisonment for one whole year, without bail or mainprize; and, for the second offence, be imprisoned during life." Here I affirm nothing, but appeal to the whole world: I appeal, Sir, to your own conscience, whether this be, or be not, an unjust and a persecuting act? By the latter, the Canons, "If any man shall affirm any of these things contained in the book of Articles, Common Prayer, or Ordination," (in which, yet, there are many things acknowledged, by your own most learned divines, and, I doubt not, by yourself, to need alteration,) your IV, V, VI, VII, and VIIIth, Canons thunder out upon him a terrible excommunication, *ipso facto*,* by which

* Concerning an excommunication, *ipso facto*, our late learned primate, Dr. Wake, has observed, "First, That there is no need, in this case, of 'any admonition, as where the judge is to give sentence; but every one is to take notice of the law at his peril, and to see that he be not overtaken by it. And, secondly, That there is no need of any sentence to be pronounced which the canon itself hath passed, and which is, by that means, already promulged upon every one as soon as he comes within the obligation of it. In other cases, a man may do things worthy of censure, and yet behave himself so warily in them,"

which he is to be cut off as a cankered and rotten member, and not to be restored till he hath repented and publicly revoked his wicked errors. Dost not this favour, Sir, of an antichristian and persecuting spirit?

But you yourself seem not to have a just horror of the dreadful sin of persecution, and to be a little too deeply tinged with this fanatical spirit; for, you call around for "the Church's sword to fall upon heretics as well as upon immoral persons; and put me in mind, that, by that ancient discipline," (which you wish to see restored,) "open schismatics were treated almost as roughly as any sort of offenders whatsoever."† By heretics, no doubt, you mean those whom you take to be such; and, by open schismatics, those who are withdrawn from your Church: these you wish to see roughly handled, and to have the *Church's sword drawn upon them*. But, God Almighty be praised! we live under so just a government as is not, we hope, likely to gratify this cruel wish.

Do not you remember, Sir, that the first reformers were counted heretics and open schismatics by the high churchmen among whom they lived? that Jesus Christ and his apostles endured the same reproach? that our dear brethren in France, who are now‡ bleeding under the Church's sword, are most confidently reckoned such by their persecuting rulers and priests? But is it fit that these heretics should be thus roughly handled? Or, is it those only, whom you are pleased to call by that name, who merit these rough measures? Whenever, Sir, you shall produce your patent from heaven, constituting you judge of heresy, and shall

"them, as to escape the punishment of the Church for want of legal evidence to convict him. But *excommunicatio canonis ligat etiam occulta delicta*. Where the canon gives sentence, there is no escaping; but the conscience of every man becomes obliged by it, as soon as ever he is sensible that he has done that which was forbidden, under the pain of such an excommunication." Appeal in Behalf of the King's Supremacy, page 22.

† Letter III. pages 12, 21.

‡ This part of these Letters was first published in 1747.

be

be able, authoritatively and infallibly, to pronounce what is, and what is not, to be punished as such, then the Church's sword may be put into your hands. But, till then, Sir, it is much safer to let it remain sheathed, lest, under the notion of heretics, you fall upon, and roughly handle, men better than yourself. This has ever been the case since the days of the apostles, when ecclesiastics have presumed authoritatively to draw and to use the sword of the Church.

But you add, "It is well we cannot say your Church has shewn a dividing spirit, and actually divided itself by an open schism, from a sound part of the Catholic Church; that, indeed, would have been an unanswerable reason for your dissent."* Yes, this also, Sir, we can say, and therefore stand justified by your own concession. That misguided unhappy prince, Charles I. and his furious primate, Laud, began this fatal schism in complaisance to the Church of Rome, and actually divided the Church of England from a sound part of the Catholic Church; and the same schismatical spirit has ever since too generally prevailed in it.

The Dutch, Walloon, and French, Churches, here in England, were established by charters from several of our princes; but Lord Clarendon informs us; "That, as these foreign congregations were governed by a presbytery, according to the custom and constitution of those parts, of which they had been natives, the bishops growing jealous that the countenancing another discipline of the Church here, by order of state, would at least diminish the reputation and dignity of the episcopal government," got them suppressed. And, that this might be sure to look like more than what was necessary to the civil policy of the kingdom, whereas, in all former times, the ambassadors and all foreign ministers of state, employed from England into any parts where the reformed religion was exercised, frequented

* Letter III. page 60:

"their Churches, and gave all possible counte-
 "nance to their profession; the contrary to this
 "was now, with great industry, practised, and
 "some advertisements, if not instructions, given
 "to our ambassadors (Le Clerc says they were
 "ordered) to forbear any extraordinary com-
 "merce with men of that profession. And Lord
 "Scudamore, the last ordinary ambassador at Paris,
 "not only declined going to Charenton, (the
 "Protestant Church,) but furnished his own chapel
 "with wax-candles on the communion-table, &c.
 "And, besides, was careful to publish, upon all oc-
 "casions, by himself, and those who had the
 "nearest relation to him, *that the Church of*
 "*England looked not upon the Hugonots of France*
 "*as a part of their communion, which was like-*
 "*wife too much, and too industriously, discoursed*
 "*at home.*"* Behold here, Sir, the Church of
 England actually dividing itself from a sound part
 of the Catholic Church! for, such surely you will
 own the brave Protestants in France, who have
 borne testimony to the faith by so great and so
 glorious a fight of afflictions, and sealed it with
 seas of blood.

I would also put you in mind of another fact
 that seems to have escaped your reading or your
 memory. Upon the Queen of Bohemia's earnest
 solicitation with the king, her brother, (Charles I.
 anno 1634,) a collection was ordered, throughout
 England, for the poor persecuted ministers of the
 Palatinate, who were banished their country for
 their religion. In the brief, which was granted
 for this purpose, was this clause: *Whose cases are*
the more to be deplored, because this extremity is
fallen upon them for their sincerity and constancy
in the true religion, which we, together with them,
profess. Archbishop Laud excepted against this
 clause, and denied that the religion of the Palatine
 Churches was the same with ours, because they
 were Calvinists, and their ministers had not epis-
 copal ordination. Laud acquainted the king with

* Clarend. Hist. Rebell. Vol. III. pages 96, 97.

his objections. The clause was ordered to be expunged, and the brave unhappy Palatines were thus publicly disowned by the governors of the Church, who, in all reasonable construction, must be supposed to know and speak its sense, and were not allowed to be professors of the same true religion.* How shamefully unchristian and schismatical was this conduct!

Of the like schism was it also guilty in the occasional Conformity-Act, which took place in a late reign. For, it thereby forbid, under severe penalties, all its members, who had any places of profit or trust, to worship, or hold communion with, any of the foreign Churches, Dutch, French, &c. in those kingdoms in which its liturgy was not used. And, should any minister, of any of the reformed Churches of Scotland, France, Germany, Holland, now come into England, would your Church receive them as ministers, or admit them as such, to officiate in its public worship? I presume you know, Sir, she would not. But is not this virtually renouncing their communion? Nor will you admit even the lay-members of any of these foreign Churches to your communion at the Lord's supper, except, besides what Christ has ordered, they will submit also to some order and institution of your own.

Now your great Stillingfleet† hath thus determined: "That which confines must also divide the Church; for, by that confinement, a separation is made betwixt the parties confined and the other, which separation must be made by the party so limiting Christian communion." Upon the whole, then, it is most evident that your Church has shewn, and does shew, a schismatical and dividing spirit, and has actually divided itself from sound parts of the universal Church. This, therefore, you will please to take for another unanswerable reason for our dissent.

You must excuse me, Sir, if I think you treat a

* Neale's Hist. Purit. Vol. II. page 271.

† Ration. Account, page 359.

great deal too severely a worthy body of men, our ministers, when you represent them as “persons
 “whom the faithful, far from being permitted to
 “enter into any pastoral relation to them, are not
 “permitted to have any Christian communion
 “with them; no, not so much as any intimate un-
 “necessary acquaintance and familiarity with them
 “in common life:” *—and also, “They are not
 “duly ordained to their office: that their admi-
 “nistrations are most certainly irregular, an un-
 “necessary and wanton, if not a factious, depar-
 “ture from the primitive order: and that, there-
 “fore, I cannot depend, at least with so much
 “assurance as is requisite to the peace and acqui-
 “escence of my mind, that such ordinances will
 “be blessed to me,” † I have weighed this matter
 with a good deal of attention, and, upon the whole,
 am fully satisfied, both from Scripture and anti-
 quity, that Presbyters have a right to, and did,
 from the apostles times, actually, ordain. There
 are two things, amongst many others, which I beg
 leave to offer to your consideration upon this
 point.

1. That the ministers of the reformed Churches,
 in all foreign parts, have almost all of them, I ap-
 prehend, no other than presbyterian ordination.

The whole company of illustrious Protestant
 Churches of Scotland, France, Holland, Switzer-
 land, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Denmark, ex-
 cept perhaps Sweden, &c. have none but Presbye-
 rian ordination amongst them; for, Luther, Calvin,
 Bucer, Melancton, Bugenhagius, &c. and all the
 first reformers and founders of these Churches,
 who ordained ministers among them, were them-
 selves Presbyters, and no other. And, though in
 some of these Churches there are ministers which
 are called Superintendants, or Bishops, yet these
 are only *primi inter pares*, ‡ *the first among equals*,
 not pretending to any superiority of order. Hav-
 ing themselves no other orders than what either

* Letter II. page 8.

† Letter I. page 73.

‡ Account of Denmark, page 235.

Presbyters gave them, or were given them as Presbyters, they can convey no other to those they ordain.* You are a gentleman of too great discernment to urge the stale pretence, that this is to these Churches a matter not of choice, but of necessity and force. For, if they thought episcopal ordination, I do not say necessary, but even more regular or expedient, could they not with the greatest ease immediately obtain it? Would not the Church of England, upon the least intimation of their willingness to receive it, most readily send them bishops to supply this defect? You know, Sir, too well its charitable disposition, and even offers of this kind, in the least to suspect it. Whatever censures you pass, then, upon the orders and administrations of the ministers among us, they equally fall upon all the reformed Churches throughout the whole Protestant world. If ours are an unnecessary and wanton departure from the primitive order, theirs are the very same. Now it gives me great pleasure to see myself in such a croud of excellent and good company. And, unless you can offer something more demonstrative on this head than I have ever yet seen, my mind will enjoy full peace as to the regularity of the ministration on which I attend. But,

2. It seems a little strange to hear you glorying over us, and consequently over all the foreign Churches, as to this matter of *orders*, when these very orders, in which you glory, you acknowledge to have been derived only from the Church of Rome,—a Church which yourselves, in your homilies, confess to be idolatrous and antichristian; “Not only a harlot, as the Scripture calleth her, but also a foul, filthy, old, withered, harlot, the foulest and filthiest that ever was seen.—And,

* The Danish Church is, indeed, at this time, governed by bishops. But they look upon episcopacy as only a human institution; and the first Protestant prelates in that kingdom were ordained by Bugenhagius, a mere Presbyter; who, by consequence, could convey no other than a presbyterian ordination to their successors ever since. Seckendorf. Hist. Lutheran. Lib. 20, Sect. 1. with caveat, page 15.

“that, as it at present is, and hath been for 900 years, it is so far from the nature of the true Church, that nothing can be more.”* Note, these homilies every clergyman publicly declares, and subscribes with his hand, that they contain a *godly and wholesome doctrine*, fit to be read in Churches by ministers.

Now it is only from this filthy, withered, old, harlot that you derive, by ordination, your spiritual descent. You confess yourself born of her as to ecclesiastical pedigree: and the sons of this foulest and filthiest of harlots you acknowledge as brethren, by admitting their orders as regular and valid, whereas those of the protestant Churches you reject. If a priest, ordained with all the superstitious and idolatrous rites of this antichristian and false Church, comes over to the Church of England, you admit him as a brother duly ordained, without obliging him to pass under that ceremony again: but, if a minister of the reformed churches joins himself to you, you consider him as but a layman, an unordained person, and oblige him to receive orders according to your form. How, Sir, is it possible to account for this procedure! Can that Church, which is no true Church, impart valid and true orders? Can a filthy old harlot produce any other than a spurious and corrupt breed? Will you rest the validity and regularity of your administrations on your receiving the sacerdotal character from the bishops and popes of the Romish Church? many, if not most, of whom, were men of most corrupt and infamous lives,—men, who were so far from being regular and valid ministers in the Church of Jesus Christ, that they *had neither part nor lot in this matter, their hearts not being right in the sight of God*; † such men, therefore, could not possibly, duly, or regularly, officiate therein; consequently had no power to communicate, or convey, orders or offices in the Christian Church. Whatever offices they conveyed, therefore, are

* Vide Homilies, pages 162, 295. † Acts viii. 21.

at best doubtful and suspicious, if not absolutely null, irregular, and void. So that really your own orders, if strictly examined, may minister great doubt and disquietude of mind.

If Charity then were silent, Prudence, methinks, should loudly dictate, that you speak gently as to the authority and orders of our ministers, when you know it is in their power so strongly to retort. It was, therefore, surely not wise, Sir, as well as extremely unkind, to set them up as objects of public odium and avoidance, and to admonish "every good man not to have any intimate or unnecessary acquaintance with them, or familiarity, in common life." But, *Blessed*, our Lord hath said, *are ye when men shall hate you, and separate you from their company, and cast out your names as evil, for the Son of man's sake. Rejoice ye in that day, and leap for joy; for, behold, your reward in heaven is great!* *

You very strenuously contest what you call "one of the favourite and fundamental principles of the dissention, namely, *that every Lay-Christian has a right to choose his own pastor.*" † A right so evidently founded on reason, Scripture, and the undoubted practice of the primitive Church, and so generally acknowledged by all the learned of your own communion, that I cannot but wonder at the alertness with which you make your attack upon it. The charge given to the Christian people,—*to take heed what they hear,—to beware of false prophets,—not to believe every spirit, but to try the spirits,*—incontestibly proves them to have a right of judgement and of choice relating to this matter; and that this right, which God has given them, it is their duty to use.

When an apostle was to be chosen in the room of Judas the traitor, the whole body of the disciples were applied to on that occasion, *Acts* i. who appointed, by common suffrage, two from their whole number to be candidates for that office, ver. 23. "The election, you say, was evi-

* Luke vi. 22, 23. † Letter II, p. 6.

—dently

“dently made by God.”* But was it not as evidently made by the people also? If the choice of one from the two be acknowledged to be the act of God, was not the choice of these two, from among the whole number, as much the act of the people? The people then were actually concerned in that choice. “The seven deacons, Acts “vi. you say, were but presented, or recommended, by the brethren.”† But let the sacred story determine: *Wherefore, brethren, look ye out amongst you seven men of honest report: And the saying pleased the whole multitude, and they chose Stephen and Philip, &c.*—Can words be more express?

That bishops and pastors were chosen in the ancient Church by the suffrage of the people, the evidence is so strong, as greatly to try the countenance of the person who disputes it. Ignatius, if you will allow him genuine, says, *πρεπον εστιν υμιν, ως εκκλησια Θεου, χειροτονησαι επισκοπον.* || *It becomes you, as the Church of God, to choose a bishop.* Alexander was made bishop of Jerusalem by the compulsion, or choice, of the members of that Church. Upon the death of Anferus, bishop of Rome, all the people met together in the Church to choose a successor,—and they all took Fabianus, and placed him in the episcopal chair. So Cornelius, his successor, was elected by the suffrage of the clergy and laity. Cyprian often acknowledges he was made bishop of Carthage, *favore plebis,—populi universi suffragio*, &c. *By the favour and vote of all the people.* ‡ And expressly says, *Plebs maxime habet potestatem, vel eligendi dignos sacerdotes, vel indignos recusandi.* *The chief power of choosing worthy ministers, and of rejecting the unworthy, belongs to the people.* I produce no farther evidence upon a point so incontestible, but the words of a learned brother of your own, high

* Letter II. page 8. † Ibid. || Epist. ad Philad.

‡ Vide Constitution and Discipline of the primitive Church, page 46.

enough for church-power, "That the people had
 "votes in the choice of bishops all must grant,
 "and it can be only ignorance and folly that
 "plead the contrary."*

"You think a man provides very well for his
 "soul, who submits himself to the instructions, and
 "devoutly attends all the administrations, of an
 "able and orthodox minister, by whomsoever
 "provided. And it will be confessed, you sup-
 "pose, that the king and bishops, lord-chancellor,
 "nobility, and gentry, who are our great pa-
 "trons, are more competent judges of the abilities
 "and particular orthodoxy of clergymen, and of
 "their fitness for stations, than the common run
 "of men, especially the vulgar."† But imagine
 yourself, Sir, for a moment, on the other side of
 the water, preaching this wholesome doctrine to
 the good Protestants of France. If kings, bishops,
 &c. have authority and right to appoint pastors to
 the people, then the people are bound to receive
 and attend the pastors they send. But, if this be
 right in one country, (I must again put you in
 mind,) it is right also in another, unless one
 kingdom can produce a warrant, or charter, from
 heaven, giving it such authority, which other
 kingdoms have not. If this doctrine be truth in
 England, it is truth also in France. The brave
 Protestants then have rashly and unwarrantably
 withdrawn themselves from the pastors whom
 their king and bishops had set over them. They
 ought to return, and submit to their established
 guides, and not proudly attempt to find ministers
 more able and orthodox than those their superiors
 have solemnly deputed to that trust. Will you
 stand, Sir, to this doctrine? If not, you must al-
 low every man a right to judge for himself.

To the common and just plea, "That every
 "man has as good right to choose his own pastor,
 "to whom to commit the care of his soul, as to
 "choose his lawyer or his physician, with whom
 "he intrusts his body or estate," you reply,

* Lowth on Church-power. † Ibid. p. 9.

"Physicians,

“ Physicians, in many places, are provided by
 “ governors for those who are sick, as in Chelsea
 “ and other hospitals, whilst nobody dreams of
 “ any incroachment upon their natural rights.”
 But tell me, Sir, would you not complain, if,
 whenever you were sick, you were obliged to ac-
 cept of this public provision, and must commit
 yourself to the care of those gentlemen of the fa-
 culty who officiated in the hospital, supposing you
 lived near it, whatever notion you had of their
 fidelity or skill? Or, should a physician be pro-
 vided and established by law in each parish of this
 kingdom, would you not call it an infringement of
 your natural right to be obliged to call him in,
 (however ignorant or incapable you took him to
 be,) and to commit your health to his care, espe-
 cially if there was at hand another, licensed by
 authority, whom you thought to have better judg-
 ment, and from whose prescriptions you had re-
 ceived frequent and signal relief? I am persuad-
 ed, in this case, you would strongly and very
 justly complain of the restraint. But every man,
 surely, is as capable, and has as undoubted a right
 to judge and to choose what minister to attend for
 the edification of his soul, as what physician to con-
 sult for the recovery of his health.

“ No, (you reply,) there is a difference in the two
 “ cases. Your pastors are your guides and govern-
 “ ors, to whom you owe subjection in spiritual
 “ things: and it is not, I think, quite so reasona-
 “ ble to challenge to yourselves the choosing of
 “ these as of the other, who have no authority
 “ over you.” But, I beseech you, good Sir, who
 made them my governors? Who gave them this
 rule and authority over me? Does every gay
 stripling, just emancipated from the college, that
 can get himself to be induced into a good living,
 (and there are various ways of getting, you know,
 Sir, not fit here to be mentioned,) does he, I ask,
 thenceforward become governor of all the souls
 dwelling in his parish, to whom they owe *subjec-
 tion in spiritual things*? What must all the
 learned, the wise, the grave, and experienced,
 persons,

persons, residing in that parish, consider the en-
 robed youth as their spiritual ruler, vested with
 authority over them, in things pertaining to God,
 to conscience, and to eternity! Yes, he has au-
 thority, you say, over me; I owe him spiritual
 subjection. But how far, Sir, does the authority
 of my young ruler extend? Must I believe what-
 ever he tells me because he hath said it; or, do
 whatever he commands me because he hath enjoined
 it; or follow my spiritual guide wherever he
 shall lead me, without considering, examining,
 and judging, for myself, whither the course tends?
 And, if I happen to think he is leading me wrong,
 must I still obey, and submit to my ghostly direc-
 tor, and trust God with the event? Am I to deli-
 ver myself up entirely, or only a little, and in
 part, to his sacerdotal authority? And must I see
 things in religion only and always by the eyes of
 my overseer, or ought I not also sometimes, at
 least, to see with my own? Will you please to
 inform me also, whether, as my young governor
 undertakes to judge for me now, he will also un-
 dertake to be judged for me hereafter, and to be
 condemned for me too, if I happen to go astray by
 going as he directs? A certain nobleman, not
 half a century ago, got his huntsman inducted into
 a good living; and, from the care of his hounds
 advanced him to the priesthood, and to the cure
 of souls. Now, from the time of his investiture
 with this new character and office, he became the
 governor and guide, it seems, of all the souls in
 his parish, and they owed him subjection in spi-
 ritual things. If a Locke then, a Newton, or
 even his Lordship himself, who gave him the liv-
 ing, had dwelt within its bounds, they ought re-
 verently to regard him as their spiritual governor
 and director, and to *submit themselves to him* as
 having *the rule over them*, and *watching for their*
souls. But are these claims to be supported, or is
 this doctrine to be preached, in this age of liberty
 and light? Let them, for the honour of Christi-
 anity, be eternally suppressed.

To return, Sir, to the point whence I set out.

After

After the considerations which I have suggested, I still hold myself justified in asserting the right which every man has, in things of religion, to call no man upon earth master, but to examine, and judge, and choose, for himself.

As to the manner in which the choice of our ministers is conducted, against which you except, I believe no elections, of any kind, are transacted with greater fairness and equity than these. And the nature of the thing speaks that it must be so: for, ours being assemblies formed only by consent, and supported only by voluntary contributions of their members, any oppressive or iniquitous management would throw them presently into confusion, disband, and break them up.

But it is time, Sir, that I now release your patience and attention, having, I fear, strained both to their utmost extent. There are many other parts of your letters as exceptionable as those I have taken notice of, but I would not be tedious. I might have expostulated with you largely on your reading, as parts of your public worship, the fabulous and gross legends of Bel and the Dragon, of Judith and Susannah; and, above all, the magical romance of rescuing a fair virgin from the enchantments of her infernal lover, and conjuring away the amorous devil Asmodeus by the fumes of a fish's liver. Is it for the honour of the Christian name, think you, Sir, to have such spurious and idle tales read solemnly in our Churches, (if solemnly they can be read,) and made parts of our public worship? What will an unbeliever think when present at such worship! When he sees such things not only bound up with the Holy Scriptures, but commanded to be read as such in the order of the Common Prayer, will it not heighten his contempt of the credulity of believers, and establish his prejudices against the history, the miracles, and the doctrines, of Christ?

I might also have asked you, Sir, to what oriental deity you pay your devoirs, when, from the North, the South, the West, the worshippers in your Church, on certain solemn occasions, turn
reverently

reverently towards the East, and make their peculiar honours? To whom, Sir, I beseech you, are these peculiar honours paid? Not surely to the immense omnipresent Jehovah! He is an infinite Spirit, you know, alike present in all places, not more confined to one quarter of the heavens than to another. To represent him as being so is to dishonour and offend him, to detract from the glory of his immensity or omnipresence, and to give men very false and unworthy notions of God. This worshipping towards the East is not, I think, ordered by any Canon of your Church, which is now generally received; but it is (if I mistake not) its common and prevailing practice. I should be glad to be informed, (for, I assure you, Sir, I am quite ignorant,) what shadow of ground, either from reason or Scripture, you can possibly pretend for this unaccountable superstition: for, such you must allow me at present to think it. If you say, the worship is paid toward the altar, this seems to make the matter more inexplicable still. For, what is there in the altar to make it a proper object of religious veneration? Indeed, while the bread and wine was upon it, the people, who believed it to be the very body of Christ, did well to pay their homage to it. But now that idol is taken thence, I cannot possibly perceive what shadow of divinity Protestants see in the altar, that they should pay it religious honours.

As much, Sir, am I at a loss, when endeavouring to reconcile to reason and good sense another of your additional beauties and splendours of public worship, viz. bowing at the name of Jesus. As for that passage of the apostle, Philip. ii. 10.—*That at the name of Jesus every knee shall bow*, the learned men of your Church, I presume, universally disclaim it, as not in the least authorising or enjoining this practice. Your great Dr. Nichols* vindicates your Church from such an uncouth and ridiculous abuse of this text, and affirms, that it is not once mentioned in any of your ecclesiastical constituti-

* Defence, &c. Part II. page 319.

ons as to this matter; and adds, that you are not so dull as to think that those words can be rigorously applied to this purpose. But, if this text be acknowledged not in the least to authorise or require this act of worship, what shadow of argument, Sir, can you possibly bring, either from reason or Scripture, which shall so much as seem to support it? Why then does your Church command, (Canon XVIII.) *that, when in time of divine service the Lord Jesus shall be mentioned, duly and lowly reverence shall be done by all persons present?* Is not this, Sir, by your own confession, an act of will-worship, a commandment, an invention, of men, not in the least founded upon the authority and will of God!

But why, Sir, must this lowly reverence be made at the name of Jesus, and not at the name of Christ, at the name Immanuel, Jehovah, or God? Is there not in all these something at least as venerable and worthy of peculiar honours; indeed something much more so than there is in the name of Jesus? a name not at all peculiar to our blessed Saviour, but which was common to him with a great many other men? But, if this peculiar reverence must be made at the name of Jesus, why not at all times whenever it is mentioned, at least in public worship? Why in the creed only, which is but a human composition, and not every time it is read from the gospels and epistles, which were indited by the holy Spirit? But I press no farther a point, which, I believe, few of your own Church think capable of a rational and solid defence.

I have now finished my reply, Sir, to the letters with which you have publicly honoured me, and have with freedom set before you the chief difficulties and objections which keep me in a state of separation from your Church. If, by calm and fair argument, you can shew my objections to be weak and futile, I shall with pleasure become your convert, and readily obey the calls of worldly interest and honour.

But

But, as you, Sir, have the dignities, emoluments, and powers, of this world on your side, you must give us leave to think, at least till we are better taught, that we have TRUTH on our's; TRUTH, which is great, and which *will finally prevail*. Nor am I, Sir, without hope, that, upon an impartial review of the merits of the cause between us, omnipotent TRUTH may even bend your mind towards us, and dispose you, like one who has had the honour of being called the *great apostle*, to join yourself to those you once censured and despised.

What, though we have not the honours and profits of this world to draw you to our communion, are we, on this account, the less likely to be the genuine apostolic Church of a crucified, despised, insulted, Jesus? Hath he not expressly told us, that *his kingdom is not of this world*:* that *whoever will come after him, must deny himself, and take up his cross*:† that *not many mighty and noble are called*?‡ Are not the *witnesses to TRUTH, to prophecy, clothed in sackcloth*,|| till the promised times of refreshing come from the appearance of Christ? Is not the pure apostolic Church, the *true spouse of Christ*, represented in the Revelation, as a *woman driven into the wilderness*,** i. e. in an afflicted and forsaken state, whilst the corrupt and antichristian Church (the apostate Church of Rome) is caressed and enriched by the kings of the earth,¶ glittering in all the pomp and splendour of this world, wantoning in luxury, power, and wealth? Does TRUTH need the charms of earthly grandeur to recommend it, or the force of civil power to spread or to establish it? Was it thus the blessed gospel was at first propagated, made its way, and prevailed over all the earth? No: worldly grandeur and power have generally, you well know, Sir, if not always, been extremely injurious to it; have enervated, obstructed, and, under pretence of improving, have greatly cor-

* John xviii. 36.

† Mat. xvi. 24.

‡ 1 Cor. i. 26.

|| Rev. xi. 3.

** Rev. xii. 14.

¶ Rev. xvii. 4, 5-13-17.

rupted and depraved, it, and have robbed it of its native beauty, glory, and strength.

High dignities and preferments, mitres and thrones, lordships and large revenues, have a mighty force, you will own, Sir, to bias and pervert the mind in its searches after TRUTH. These are not the means which the God of TRUTH uses to draw the mind to it; but you know they are the means, which the great enemy is wont to use, to seduce the mind from it. It is, therefore, I apprehend, Sir, no presumption at all in favour of any Church, that it shines with all the glory of wordly honours and wealth. This the prophetic Scriptures very clearly describe as the state of the false Church, whilst the true Church of Jesus Christ, his genuine and faithful followers, are to be a *little despised flock*; a sect, *every where spoken against*: in the world it is *to have tribulation*, till the expected happy period when it shall be *the Father's good pleasure to give them the kingdom*.

Let not, then, the low estate of our interest, as to the present world, at all frighten, or discourage, you, Sir, from casting in your lot among us. *The world passeth away*, and all its glories and pomp will soon vanish like a dream before the descending Son of God, whom we stedfastly expect. And then to be found faithful, and to have adhered with unshaken loyalty to the only Lawgiver, Lord, and King, of the Church;—to have denied ourselves any worldly honours, preferments, or profits, out of conscience towards him;—to have been separated from mens company, cast out and reproached, because we would not make a sacrifice of our virtue and integrity to the applause of the many, or the favour of the great,—will yield divine comfort, and procure immortal honours in the everlasting kingdom of God. Pardon me, Sir, if I am here acting a little out of character, and seeming to invade your office; for, I am extremely ambitious of engaging so ingenious a gentleman among us.

These, Sir, are the prospects with which Dissenters support themselves under all their disadvantages

vantages with regard to the present world. They remember whose disciples and followers they are; who it is that hath said, *in vain do they worship me, teaching for doctrine the commandments of men*; who hath strictly charged them *to call no man upon earth master*, because *ONE only is their master, even Christ*; and, finally, who it is that hath promised, that, *if any man shall forsake house, or brethren, or sisters, or children, or lands, for his name's sake, he shall receive a hundred fold, and shall inherit everlasting life.*

I now conclude, Sir, with beseeching you very carefully to remember, that the controversy between us depends absolutely and entirely upon the decision of this single point: *Is there any other Lawgiver, or King, in the Church of God, to whose authority and command, as to things of religion, Christians are bound to submit, BESIDES Jesus Christ? Or, is there not?* If there be no other Lawgiver besides Jesus Christ, no other King, no other authority, to whose decrees in point of doctrine, and to whose injunctions in point of worship, Christians are obliged, and ought, to submit, then the Dissenters, in every impartial judgement, will be, must be, justified: then they act right: then they ought to be commended, and will surely be rewarded, for adhering loyally and firmly to the *ONE only King and Lord of the Church*; and for faithfully opposing the claims of any other power; and for refusing obedience to the injunctions of any other Lawgiver; and the decisions of any other Judge, who hath made other articles of faith, other terms of communion, other rites of worship, *BESIDES and ABOVE* those which Christ himself has made.

For, to illustrate the case—If any foreign Prince should pretend to make laws, and prescribe rules of action to the people of these realms; and should exact obedience to his injunctions from the subjects of the King of Great Britain, I ask, would not your allegiance to him, your only sovereign, require and oblige you to make your protest against any such laws, and to refuse your obedience to

them? But is not the Church a province in which Christ alone is King, as much as these realms are the dominions only of the King of England? If any human potentate, then, shall rise up in the Church, and shall claim authority and dominion over the consciences of Christ's subjects,—authority, as to things of faith, to decree what he hath not decreed,—and dominion, as to things of worship, to appoint rites and institutions which he hath not appointed,—I ask you, Sir, does not your allegiance to Christ, your only sovereign, require and oblige you to enter your protest against such usurped authority, and to refuse your obedience to it?

This—(I repeat it, Sir, because I earnestly in-treat your peculiar attention to it)—this is the essential and important point upon which the controversy between us entirely turns. If you can prove that there is another Lawgiver, another Judge, another King, in the Church, besides Jesus Christ, to whose authority we are to submit in things of religion, and that the king and parliament of these realms are this Lawgiver and this Judge, you will then at once gain your point; and, by that single blow, you will entirely overthrow the dissenting interest and Churches. We will immediately become your converts, and flock into the established Church.

But, if you cannot prove this point, you must yield the cause to us: you must, in effect, own us justified before the world; and we still indulge the rational and reviving hope of being acknowledged by our great Lawgiver, at his return into the world, as his loyal and obedient subjects; of being advanced to peculiar honours and dignities in his kingdom, as we have here suffered on account of our duty and allegiance to him; and of receiving from our Judge, before angels and men, that sentence of applause, *Well done, good and faithful servants, enter ye into the joy of your Lord!*

I have only to add, that this principle,—that Christ is the only Lawgiver and King in his Church, and that no man, no body of men, upon earth,

earth, has any authority to make laws, or to prescribe things, in religion, which shall oblige the consciences of his subjects,—is the grand, the only, principle upon which the unity, the purity, and the peace, of the Christian Church can possibly subsist. Take away this, and you let in endless discords and corruptions into it: you split it into parties: you make Christianity one thing in one country, and a quite different thing in another. In England, you make it wear an episcopal form: in Scotland, a Presbyterian: in France, a Popish: in Denmark, a Lutheran: in Prussia, a Calvinistic: in Russia, a Grecian, &c. But ought these things to be so? Is Christ divided? Is this the unity of his one, beautiful, well-compacted, body? Can these be all genuine apostolic Christian Churches? Rather, are any of them so? When the *powers of this world* take upon them authoritatively to interpret and prescribe, in things of religion, which are Christ's kingdom and province, they act beyond their sphere: they invade the throne of another prince: the rights of Christians are violated, the unity of the Church is broken, and a gate is opened for innumerable superstitions and inventions to enter, and mingle with the pure doctrines of Christ; and hence necessarily flow schisms, emulations, contentions, and every evil work.

I beseech you, then, by the mercies of God, and for the honour of Christianity, and by the allegiance you owe your only Lawgiver, Jesus Christ, to weigh these things in an impartial and unbiassed mind. May his Spirit of Truth judge between us upon the point, and teach us his will! To his influence I commend you, Sir, and am,

With great sincerity,

Your very humble servant,

A. DISSENTER.

POST-

POSTSCRIPT,

Containing Remarks on the DEFENCE *of*
your THREE LETTERS.

THE preceding Letter having been sent to the press before your defence, &c. was advertised, its publication was deferred till I had seen what occasion it might have given me either to retract or support what was offered in my first letter. You seem moved at its pretending to be an Answer to your three Letters, when so small a part of them is considered therein. And, with airs quite suitable to the cause you are pleading, *ecclesiastical authority*, you give me to understand, that your taking any notice of this performance is to be considered as a condescension to which you were not obliged, and which I had no right to expect from you. But, pray recollect, what was the avowed design and purport of your Letters? Was it not to refute the great and popular objections of the Dissenters, and to bring me over to your Church? But, upon reading your Letters, I found you had scarcely touched upon the principal objections which kept me from your Church. Was it not then my part to state my objections to you, and set them in their full light? As, unasked, you had taken on you to be my instructor in this affair, had I not a right to lay my difficulties before you, and to demand your solution of them? What, must I confine myself to the pleas which you had seen fit to dress up for the Dissenters; and if I presume to offer others, will you magisterially call them *ramblings*, in which you are not obliged to follow me? Very pleasant indeed!

Here,

Here, therefore, I now put in my claim, Sir, and give you to understand, that I expect your plain and full answer to the several objections against your established forms, presented in the preceding Letter; some of which, though you knew them to be of great weight with Dissenters, you dexterously avoided bringing into the debate. To this you are most clearly and indispensably obliged by the province you have taken upon you. If there be any parts of the Liturgy indefensible and absurd, this (1.) condemns your own conformity, who not only declare, but solemnly subscribe, your *unfeigned assent and consent to all and every thing contained in and prescribed by the Book of Common Prayer, &c.* And (2.) it justifies the separation, by proving it to have been a severe and cruel measure when you cast out above two thousand of our ministers from the Church, for not declaring and subscribing this *unfeigned assent and consent, &c.* which began the separation.

This being premised, we come to the point of Church-authority, upon which the controversy turns. Here, I observe, with pleasure, that you are for mutilating your XXth article, ridding your hands of one part, and holding only to the other. "The Church's authority, in matters of faith, (you say,) you have nothing to do with."* But this authority, you know, your Church claims as much as the power of decreeing rites and ceremonies; and, against this part of its claim I as much excepted, as against the other. When, therefore, you declare that you have nothing to do with it, I must consider you as wisely declining to undertake its defence. But, then, is it not highly reproachful to your Church that it should still inflexibly maintain its claim to this authority; should force its clergy to subscribe and acknowledge this claim, and keep Dissenters from a share in those emoluments, "after which (you say) they languish," partly for refusing their

* Defence. Page 15.

solemn subscription to an article which even one of its warmest advocates is unable to defend?

“ By the Church’s power to decree rites and ceremonies is meant, a right in the pastors and governors thereof to ordain and appoint such things, so as to make it, ordinarily, the duty of the people to conform themselves to them.”* You have artfully declined to say, whom you understand by its pastors and governors; but, from other passages,† it is evident you mean the bishops and clergy; for, the civil magistrate, you declare, has no such power at all.‡ Now,

1. That the clergy have no power nor authority at all of this kind over the laity, I proved, beyond all doubt, from the express command of our great Lawgiver. *Call no man upon earth master: ONE is your master, even Christ, and all ye are brethren.* || *The princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion and authority over them, but it SHALL NOT BE so amongst you.* ¶ What have you said in answer to these texts? Not a single word! You leave them to stand in full force against you: and, without one text of Scripture to support this authority of the clergy over the laity, you go on to treat it as a thing indisputable and allowed, and labour hard in raising a pompous structure upon the sand. What you say, as to the *kiss of charity*, has been considered above, page 55. Should even this be allowed to be a merely ecclesiastical and prudential institution, it will by no means establish the authority you claim for your pastors and governors; the orders, decrees, and appointments, of those times, being by the common consent and suffrage of the whole Church, in which the laity had an equal, if not a far greater, share of authority than the clergy.** But,

2. Your lodging this power in the pastors and governors absolutely, contradicts the articles

* Defence. page 10. † Letter II. page 14.

‡ Defence. p. 18. || Matt. xxiii. 8, 9. ¶ Matt. xx. 25.

** Vide Examination of the Codex, page 120.

themselves.

themselves. For, as the XXth article claims it for the Church, so the immediately preceding article (XIX.) expressly defines what it means by the Church, viz. "A congregation of faithful men, where the pure word of God is preached." It is to the whole body of the faithful, then, that this power of decreeing ceremonies, if any such there be, belongs. How then do you presume, Sir, to wrest it from them, and to vest it solely in the clergy? And,

3. When you add, "that, to this right of the pastors, to decree ceremonies, it is the people's duty, ordinarily, to conform themselves:"—the word *ordinarily* seems to be brought in with the view of darkening the point, and of preparing a *salvo* in case the argument should press too hard upon you. What mean you, Sir, by *ordinarily*? How shall the people know when it is, and when it is not, their duty to submit to these injunctions of their spiritual governors? Are the people themselves to judge, and always to judge, of the fitness and expedience of the enjoined ceremonies, or are they not? If they are not, then they are absolutely to resign themselves to the direction of their governors, which is palpable and gross Popery, and leads directly to Rome. But, if they are to judge, the Babel of Church-authority is at once overthrown; for, then the authority resides no longer in the decrees of the governors, but in the judgement of the people. It is the judgement they form of them which alone makes them binding upon them or not. Of their number, whether they are too many; and of their nature, whether they are superstitious, foppish, and vain; you seem sometimes to allow the people are to judge. But, if they have a right to judge, they have a right also to act in consequence of that judgement; and to withdraw from those Churches where such ceremonies are enjoined as they think foppish and vain, and to join themselves to others, where they think the worship of God is performed in a more scriptural and

proper

proper manner. So that, after all this solemn parade about Church-authority, you see it turns out to be a mere shadow. It is an authority to command, which no one is under any obligation to obey. This power of making ceremonies must be either limited or unlimited. If it be not unlimited, (which you seem to disavow,) pray what limits it? what prescribes its bounds, *beyond which it shall not pass*? If the church has power to ordain five ceremonies, why not ten? And, if ten, why not more? Who shall pretend to say how far it may go?

Your illustration "as to the king's injunctions," &c. * will not reach the case, because the constitution and laws of England empower the king to make such injunctions: but you have not yet proved, and I presume never will prove, that the constitution of the Christian Church empowers its pastors to decree ceremonies and rites.

You ask, † "Where does the Church pretend to be alone the proper judge, or where disallow private Christians to judge for themselves in these matters?" I will tell you, Sir. It is in its XXXIVth article, which decrees, that "Whoever, through his private judgement, willingly and purposely, doth openly break the traditions and ceremonies of the Church, which be not repugnant to the word of God, and be ordained by common authority, ought to be rebuked openly, (that others may fear to do the like,) as he that offendeth against the common order of the Church, and hurteth the authority of the magistrate." Private judgement, you see, is here forbidden to oppose the common order of the Church and the authority of the magistrate; and, when it presumes to do so, is to be censured and punished for it.

"The Church of France, and the Church of Rome, you acknowledge to be as much possessed of this power as the Church of England. But it does not follow, that, because

* Defence, page 14.

† Ibid. page 13.

"they

“they have a power to decree rites, they may
“therefore decree fopperies and superstitions.”*

But, by what mark, I pray, do you distinguish between rites and fopperies, between ceremonies and superstitions? The consecration of earth in the Church of England, is a rite; but the consecrating of water, in the Church of France, is a foppery. In the Church of England, the priest's signing the baptised infant with the sign of the cross, in token that it shall confess a crucified Christ, is a significant rite: but, in the Church of Rome, his putting his finger into its ear, in token that it shall hear the word of God; or, salt upon its tongue, in token that its speech shall be seasoned with salt, are intolerable fopperies. The bowing to the altar, bowing at the name of Jesus, kneeling at the communion, sponsors, surplice, hoods, lawn-sleeves, and every thing of this kind, used in the Church of England, are edifying and decent ceremonies, “of clear signification and indisputable use.”† But the slip-pers and staff, knocking on the breast, elevations, crossings, gesticulations, sprinklings with holy water, &c. practised in the Church of Rome, are ridiculous superstitions. How happy! to have governors thus spiritually gifted, thus able nicely to distinguish between things that differ!

“My suggestion, that by the mere concessions
“of your XXth article, thousands of profelytes
“have been gained from you to the Church of
“Rome, is rash (you say) and groundless. Nor
“do you believe I can name one who was ever
“gained by it.”|| I will give you two instances almost equal to a thousand. The first shall be the renowned Chillingworth, who was gained to the Church of Rome chiefly by this argument, viz. *the necessity of an infallible living Judge of Controversies*; ‡ which is but a different expression for the *authority of the Church in matters of Faith*. Now, if this argument was so plausible

* Defence, page 11. † Ibid. page 11. || Ibid. page 15.

‡ Vide Life of Chillingworth, page 7.

as to vanquish and lead captive so great a master of reasoning, multitudes of weaker minds have no doubt fallen by its force. The other shall be King James II. of whom Bishop Burnet says, he gave me this account of the change of his religion. "All due care was taken to form him to a strict adherence to the Church. Among other things, much was said of the authority of the Church, and of the tradition from the Apostles, in support of episcopacy. So, when he came to observe that there was more reason to submit to the Catholic Church than to one particular Church, and that other traditions might be taken on her word, as well as episcopacy was received among us;" he thought the step was not great, but that it was "very reasonable to go over to the Church of Rome." * See how dangerous a weapon is this same Church-authority, and how capable of being used to the infinite prejudice of the Protestant cause!

"But, granting the authority of the Church, (i. e. of its pastors and governors, its bishops and clergy,) how, you ask, would our reformation be overthrown by it, which was not carried on in opposition to authority, but with the concurrence of all the authority in the nation?" † Strange, Sir, you should so soon forget! Did not I remind you that the reformation under Queen Elizabeth, and the present forms of worship, prescribed in the Common Prayer, were strongly opposed by every bishop in the kingdom; and the convocation then sitting, were so far from having any hand in it, that they presented to the parliament several propositions in favour of Popery, directly contrary to the proceedings of the parliament? The civil magistrate, you affirm, "has no power at all nor authority in these matters:" ‡ it is with the pastors and governors of

* Burnet's History of his own Times, 8vo Edition, Vol. I. page 94.

† Defence, page 15.

‡ Defence, page 18.

the Church, in whom alone it is lodged. But, behold, these pastors and governors were zealous for the old religion! They argued, voted, petitioned, strenuously for it, and against the reformation. The reformation, then, upon your principles, is built upon a wrong bottom; was carried on, not in concurrence with, but in avowed opposition to, all the authority of the nation. How justly might I here return your own ungenerous compliment, "It was great rashness, (too great in conscience,) if, indeed, it was not treachery and playing booty, to set the Protestant cause upon so sandy a foundation!"* Your principles, if digested into proper form, will stand thus: "The Church hath power and authority to decree ceremonies and rites: but, by the Church, observe, I understand, not the king and parliament, not the civil magistrate, who have no power at all relating to these matters, but the bishops only and clergy, who are appointed and called of God to be its pastors and governors. But, remember, my countrymen, the Common Prayer and forms of worship, now established and used among you, were introduced into this Church, not by the authority, no, nor by the consent, of the pastors and governors whom God hath set over you, but in direct opposition to them. It was a change brought about entirely by the civil magistrate, who had no authority to effect it. It was, therefore, really no other than an ecclesiastical rebellion, an unjustifiable revolt from the only rightful rulers and governors of the Church in its spiritual concerns."

This, Sir, is the plain language and tendency of your principles, though I know you have been so wise as to contradict them again, by allowing, "That, if Church-governors will not come into such reformation, as is according to God's word, but obstinately persevere in maintaining their sinful errors and corruptions, the people may reform themselves."† But this concession over-

* Defence, page 19.

† Ibid. page 13.

throws your whole scheme of Church-authority, makes the people the supreme and ultimate judges as to points of faith and rites of worship, brings down the decrees of the most numerous and most holy councils, convocations, and synods, to stand at the bar of every man's private judgement, and vests him with authority to receive or reject them, as to himself shall seem fit. So powerful is truth, which will prevail!

But your positions, as to the civil magistrate, deserve a more distinct and accurate consideration. "He has no power at all to decree rites in divine worship.* This power is not in the king and parliament; for, in this very article, (XX.) which, together with the rest, is confirmed by act of parliament, (13 Eliz. c. 12.) and thereby made a part of our ecclesiastical constitution, they have plainly owned it to be in the Church; and nobody imagines, that, by the Church, they meant themselves. The king and parliament then have plainly disowned any such power in themselves, and have recognised it to be in the Church."† This, Sir, is a doctrine of dangerous and important consequence, and quite contrary to fact. For,

1. As it was the queen and parliament alone, without, yea, in opposition to, the bishops and convocation, which decreed the present form and worship of your Church, so to their authority alone it owes its very being, birth, and support. By affirming that they had no power nor authority of this nature, you demolish the Church of England at once, and lay it prostrate in the dust. And,

2. That the king and parliament, by acknowledging this power to be in the Church, have not disclaimed it, nor put it out of their own hands, will appear from hence, that they have at the same time expressly told you what they mean by the Church; not the bishops and clergy, but the *congregation of the faithful*, of which congregation themselves are not only a part, but the principal

* Defence, page 18.

† Ibid. page 17.

and ruling part. And, accordingly, our law and constitution have vested the supreme power of prescribing ceremonies and rites only in them. I ask you, by what authority do the rubrics of the Common Prayer bind the clergy to obedience? or, whence is it they are obliged to observe the rites and forms prescribed in that book? Is it not entirely by the authority of parliament? As for the pastors and governors to whom you appropriate this authority, (the bishops and clergy,) they have no power, by our constitution, to make one single law, to decree one rite, or to prescribe one ceremony. When assembled in convocation, they are absolutely under the controul and direction of the civil power. "Even the very subjects of their enquiry and debate, as well as the extent of their ordinances in point of obligation, are prescribed by Statute-law; that they cannot so much as attempt any canons or constitutions without a royal licence, and that none of their ordinances are binding, even against the private customs of a single parish." * How is it then you affirm, "The king and parliament to have disowned any such power in themselves, and to have recognised it to be in the Church?" But,

3. The point is, if possible, still rendered more clear from the XXXIVth article above cited; which says, "If any man, through his private judgement, openly breaks the ceremonies of the Church, ordained by common authority, he shall be openly rebuked, as one that offendeth against the common order of the Church, and hurteth the authority of the magistrate." The authority of the magistrate, then, is indisputably concerned in ordaining these ceremonies; and your Church, Sir, however lothe you are to hear it, is undoubtedly a parliamentary and civil constitution, made, formed, and supported, entirely by the civil magistrate; and, by him alone, is it capable of being thrown into a new form.

* Examination of the Codex, page 114.

But you ask, "Are not the dissenting churches in the same sense parliamentary? Do they not depend entirely upon an act of parliament, the Act of Toleration?" * No, by no means! The dissenting Churches were formed, subsisted, and grew, without and before any parliamentary authority. We are thankful to the excellent and good government, under which we live, for the Act of Toleration: but would humbly beg leave to say, we derive not our power to assemble for divine worship, nor our ministers theirs to officiate in such assemblies, from any human law, but from our natural right as men, and from the authority of Christ. The act of toleration only protects us in the enjoyment of this right.

"But, above all things, you marvel, that, whilst I was making this push at the Church of England, I did not reflect how much I laid myself open; for, if there was ever upon earth a Church which could properly be called parliamentary, it was the Presbyterian, in the time of the grand rebellion." † What you call the grand rebellion, Sir, a British house of commons, since the Restoration, call a vindication of their just liberties; and brought one of their members, Lenthal, upon his knees at the bar, and there sharply reprimanded him for presuming to reflect upon it in the manner you have done. || Besides, if it was a grand rebellion, the shame and reproach of it falls chiefly upon the Church of England, the parliament, who began it, consisting almost entirely of members of that communion, as Lord Clarendon himself owns. But, what if the Presbyterian Church, established afterward by them, were truly parliamentary, how have I laid myself open? Had I said or suggested any thing at all relating to that Church, or the proceedings of those times? Not a single word! but, for aught I had said, it appears not but I as much condemn that establishment as yourself. How then have I

* Defence, p. 21. † Defence, p. 20.
|| Journal of the 12th of May, 1660.

laid myself open! Are you, Sir, the man that reproves me for *ramblings*?

You put the case, "That any of our Dissenting Churches, or the Church of Scotland, should, by an act of the general assembly, ordain, that a decent basin, with clean water, should be provided, and placed near the pulpit, that so the minister, taking the child in his arms, may conveniently pour, or sprinkle, water upon its face, in the name of the Father, &c. Here are several rites ordained, which Christ, in his wisdom, did not think proper to ordain, and one of them at least as exceptionable as any excepted against in our Church, sprinkling. What will this gentleman say to such an appointment?"* I will say, Sir, that, if compliance with this injunction be made a necessary term of receiving baptism in that Church, (as the cross and sponsors are made necessary in yours,) so as that no child shall be baptised that is not sprinkled from such basin; and the parent that desires to have his child dipt, (believing that to be the only way in which Christian baptism ought to be administered,) shall not have it done; in that case, Sir, I will say the Church acts a tyrannical, unjust, schismatical, part; and, if I could have my child baptised in any other Church, constituted upon a more catholic and scriptural plan, I should think it my duty to apply to it on that occasion. The spirit of ceremony-making and church-tyranny is of a restless and incroaching nature, and ought by a timely effort to be crushed. It was from such little beginnings the mass of Romish superstitions grew up to its present enormous and oppressive height.

"The natural rights you represent some of our fellow-subjects as submitting to be deprived of by disqualifying laws, without going about to turn the world upside down for their repeal,"† are much too trivial to be compared with those of

* Defence, pages 23, 24.

† Viz. That no attorney, or proctor, can act as a justice of the peace, &c. Defence, pages 6, 7.

which

which dissenters are deprived: for the fellow-subjects you refer to are not disqualified as to these offices, upon the account of conscience and religion, (which is the hard case of the Dissenters, for acting as they think they are indispensibly obliged to do by the authority and laws of God :) nor, finally, can the persons you mention be properly said to have a natural right to sustain, at the same time, two different characters, and to execute two offices, which are not allowed to be united in the same person, because they are generally inconsistent, and interfere with each other. So that the cases are not parallel. Besides, why are we represented as turning the world upside down? Have we ever kindled tumults, raised mobs, demolished houses, threatened courts of law, (as you know, Sir, who have done,) under a seditious cry, that our *Churches were in danger*? We appeal to the impartial world for the loyalty and peaceableness with which we behave.

You pass over, by your own confession, *almost half my pamphlet* * unremarked, in which the constitution of the Church of England is compared with that of the Church of Christ, and the societies shewn to be of a quite different, and even opposite, nature; so that a person's separation from the one does by no means imply his separation from the other. Your replying nothing to this, you will give me leave to impute to some other cause than "your not observing any thing" "in it which pretends to refute or contradict any" "position advanced in your letter." Is not the charge of schism your favourite and constant topic? But, if I prove the two societies so entirely different in their constitution and frame, as that my not communicating in the former does in no wise break me off from, nor in the least interrupt my communion in, the latter, is not this a refutation of one of the principal and most interesting parts of your letters? and did not justice to your argument demand a proper reply, if it had been in your power to have given one?

* Defence, page 37.

“ It is growing mighty modish (you complain) “ with our people to laugh at all notions of Church “ communion, and to make nothing of the most “ unnecessary separations.”* Yes, I thank God, the loud peals you were wont to ring us, upon the head of schism, are generally treated with much neglect, not only among our people, but even among your own. For, when we see the clergy setting themselves up for rulers and governors, claiming power, in the name of the Lord, to forgive sins, to decree ceremonies, to make laws, and to determine points of faith; and then thundering out their anathemas upon such as refuse submission to their authority;—you must not wonder if it provoke, in all sensible spectators, either contempt, indignation, or mirth!

Can these spiritual fathers, in their consciences, believe our schism to be so horrid and damning, and yet have no solicitude to remove those stones of stumbling at which we so grievously and wickedly fall? What! will they harden themselves against the cries of so many weak and perishing Christians, and destroy the souls for which Christ died? Forgive me, Sir, I cannot think that you believe schism to be really so damnable a sin as you represent it, but that it is only used as an ecclesiastical scare-crow to keep the simple in awe, and to establish a sacerdotal empire over weak and ductile minds.

“ All Christians (you affirm) living within the “ Church of England, which is co-extended with “ the kingdom, may be truly said to owe it obedience and submission; and are, *de jure*, whether “ they will be or not *de facto*, true members and “ subjects of it.”† But, pray tell me, is not the Church of Scotland equally co-extended with that kingdom as the Church of England is with this? And do not all who live within its pale owe it the like submission? Is not the Presbyterian discipline and worship as much established there as the episcopal is here? If it be schism then, and a

* Defence, page 25.

† Ibid. page 29.

grievous sin for Dissenters to withdraw from the established Church in South Britain, is it not alike schismatical and wicked in your episcopal brethren to withdraw from the Presbyterian Church established in the North? Whence is it we never hear from you any solemn admonitions to your brethren beyond the Tweed of the detestable sin of schism; warning them of its damning nature, and exhorting them speedily to unite with the established Church? Here your grave lectures may possibly have a good effect; and, if you really thought schism so grievous an offence as you affect to represent it, it is strange you never try the power of your persuasions with your brethren in the North. This would be a noble proof that you were in earnest, and sincere. But, whilst, amidst your warmest harangues against the English separation, you encourage and support the dissent from the Scottish Church, what can be thought of your outcries against schism, but that they deserve a name more severe than I am willing here to give them?

Your notion of our being “true members of the Church of England, *de jure*, though we are “not, and will not be, *de facto*,” is a refinement indeed, and quite surpasses my comprehension. I thought it entered essentially into the idea of a Church, that it is a society of volunteers, a company joined together in certain acts and professions by common consent; and that, without, much less against, his own agreement and consent, no man could, with truth, be styled a member of any Church. All persons, living in Christendom, may be said to owe Jesus Christ obedience and submission with infinitely greater reason than all the people of England can be said to owe it to the Church: but does it therefore follow that they are all, *de jure*, if they will not be *de facto*, true members of the Church of Christ? What, those who openly renounce Christ, declare him an impostor, and utterly disavow obedience and subjection to him, can such, with any truth or propriety, be styled true members of his Church! Strange divinity indeed!

deed ! Christ's Church then, instead of a congregation of faithful persons, may now be defined a society of impious blasphemers, of infidels and profane persons, who neither fear God, nor believe in Jesus Christ ; these all may be declared and treated as true members of his Church. If this, indeed, be right, then, with some pretence, it may be said, that those, who openly renounce and disclaim the Church of England, and declare they will not live in any subjection to it, may yet be considered as true members of it.

I owe allegiance to the King of England, because I receive under him the protection of the laws, and enjoy innumerable civil blessings by means of the government in which he presides, and under which I consent to live. But it does not hence follow that I owe subjection to the Church of England, (as you argue, page 29,) from whom I receive no protection, enjoy no benefit nor advantage, and in communion with which I by no means consent to to live. Consent, Sir, is indispensibly necessary to form the relation between pastors and people ; and without this consent, no Church, in any Christian or scriptural sense, can possibly be formed. Dissenters, therefore, cannot, with any justness or propriety, be styled true members of your Church. Your solemnly excommunicating them, which is casting those out of it who never were in it, would be an absurdity deserving only of contempt, if the censures of your ecclesiastical courts respected only their religious interests ; but, when we consider the cruel penalties, and the deprivations of a civil nature, with which excommunication is attended, we are justified in asserting that a power is assumed, with which the civil magistrate was never intrusted, and which can never be thus executed without violating our natural rights.

As to our posture of receiving the Lord's supper, instead of ingenuously owning your great misrepresentation, you endeavour to conceal it by proposing some quaint and frivolous questions, as, " what meaneth this informant by some of their
" Churches

* Churches which have admitted kneeling? What
 “by some in their Churches? If there were any
 “considerable number, &c.”* Their number,
 give me leave to tell you, Sir, is nothing to the
 purpose. It is the liberty they have to do it is the
 only point in debate. If all have this liberty,
 though not one in five thousand should actually use
 it, my point is established, yours overthrown; and
 you stand convicted before the world of having
 given a very wrong and injurious account of us.
 You rashly asserting that *sitting* among us was ne-
 ver allowed to be departed from: that our mini-
 sters insisted upon, and refused to abate, it. This
 from my own certain knowledge, from the infor-
 mation of others, from Baxter’s reformed Liturgy,
 I proved to be a false representation. In the se-
 cond edition of my letter, (page 21,) I added a
 passage from Dr. Calamy’s brief account of the
 German Divines, which expressly says, “The
 “communicants amongst Protestant Dissenters are
 “at liberty to use their own posture in the time of
 “receiving, though a table-posture is most com-
 “monly used.” Note, to this Brief Account, &c.
 you appear to have been no stranger: you had,
 doubtless, read it; for, you quote a long passage
 from it, (Letter II. page 62,) not four lines dis-
 tant from that which I have now cited. How
 then could you take upon you so roundly to affirm,
 “that it is never allowed to be departed from,
 “&c.” when you had seen it declared to the
 world that our communicants were at liberty to
 use their own posture!

But, if this deserves an ingenuous blush, I am
 called upon to blush with you “for having said that
 “Christ and his apostles, without all peradventure
 “sat around the table, when every body knows,
 “who knows any thing at all, that they used the
 “recumbent posture, which is no more sitting
 “than it is kneeling.”† If my assertion cannot
 be supported by indisputable authority, I have a
 blush at your command. Let my vouchers be

* Defence, page 32.

† Ibid. page 31.

heard,

heard. St. Matthew* says *he sat down with the twelve. And, as they were eating, Jesus took bread, and blessed it.* St. Mark,† *As they sat and did eat, Jesus took bread &c.* St. Luke,‡ *When the hour was come, he sat down, and the twelve apostles with him: and he took the bread, and gave thanks.* If I am now to be corrected for representing Christ and his apostles as *sitting around the table*, the weight of the stroke will fall entirely upon the Scriptures, under which patronage I am safe. I make no manner of doubt, Sir, but the posture was *sitting*, though with the body, perhaps, a little *leaning*, or *reclined*. Nor would our language afford our translators any better, or indeed any other, word than *sitting* to express it by. Pray how would you render it,—*As they RECUMBED, and did eat?* And, *when the hour was come, he RECUMBED with his twelve apostles?* If every body, “who knows any thing at all, knows “they used the recumbent posture,” then the judicious and indefatigable Mr. Henry knew nothing at all; for, he says, “He sat down in the usual “table-gesture; not lying on one side, for it was “not easy to eat, nor possible to drink, in that posture, but sitting upright, though, perhaps, sitting low;” or, rather, as Dr. Lightfoot tells us, the posture was sitting on a couch, leaning the left elbow on the table.

There is something truly extraordinary in your affirming, “That the damnatory clauses of the “Athanasian creed may be as safely subscribed, “without any explanatory declaration, as the “holy Scriptures; at least such passages as—*He “that believeth not shall be damned,—he that believeth not the son shall not see life, but the “wrath of God abideth on him,||&c.”* as much as to say, you may as confidently assent to the decisions of a weak and fallible man, concerning the everlasting state of multitudes of his fellow-men, as to the decision of the omniscient and infallible

* xxvi. 20. † xiv. 18. ‡ xxii. 14. || Defence, page 40.

God. Or thus, because God hath fixed some terms for a man's entrance into life, therefore man may take upon him to devise and fix others. Or thus, because Christ had authority to pronounce that no man, who received not the Gospel which he preached, should finally be saved by it, therefore Athanasius (if he was its compiler) had authority to pronounce, that no man, who believed not the creed which he had made, should attain eternal life, but should everlastingly perish. Are these conclusions just?

I cannot think that I need your forgiveness, Sir, for asking "whether you were among the weak and uncharitable minds, who damn to the pit of hell all who cannot receive the dark and mysterious points set forth in the Athanasian creed." For, does not that creed most peremptorily pronounce this damnation on all such? Are not you a zealous advocate for and an admirer of that creed? Do you not yourself, thirteen times a year, in the presence and Church of God, and as his minister and ambassador, declare solemnly to the people, "That, whoever does not keep whole and undefiled the faith therein delivered, he shall, without doubt, perish everlastingly?" Is any apology then necessary for my asking, "Whether you are among the weak and uncharitable persons? &c." For, if you are sincere in the use of it, and do really believe what you solemnly declare to the people when you read to them that creed, you must, surely, be content to be reckoned in that number. For, how to reconcile a solemn declaration that certain persons *without doubt perish everlastingly with hopes of their salvation*, is what no wit of the subtlest Jesuit is able to perform.

The subscriptions of our ministers, with the protestation they made against the damnatory clauses, can, with no truth I apprehend, be called "a *protestatio contra factum*, nor a subscribing assent to the truth of certain propositions, at the

“ same time declaring they do not assent to it.”*
 For it really amounted to no more than this:—
 “ I believe the articles of this creed, and think it
 “ agreeable to the word of God ; but I here pub-
 “ licly declare, I do not consider the damnatory
 “ clauses as any part of the creed, nor give my
 “ assent to them.” As for the subscription of our
 present ministers, if it be not done under a claim
 of the benefit of this protestation made by their
 predecessors, or with some such protestation
 made by themselves, I freely own, Sir, I shall
 not undertake to justify it.*

Human creeds have, I apprehend, been of infi-
 nite disservice to the Christian Church ; have
 rent it into a variety of sects and parties, and filled
 it with innumerable strifes and debates. They
 are a fence, raised around the Church, which can
 possibly keep none out of it but virtuous and ho-
 nest persons, but never can prevent one hypo-
 crite, heretic, or wicked man, from entering into
 it. I wish the case you mention may not be ex-
 tremely common, viz: “ Fraudulent and insin-
 “ cere subscriptions, and the constant use of forms,
 “ which they who use them do not approve of,
 “ whereby the conscience is defiled.”†

But the point of subscriptions, which is the subject
 of your Appendix, will be considered by an abler

* The greatest part of our ministers never subscribed the
 articles which the Act of Toleration required, notwith-
 standing the heavy fines and penalties to which they were
 exposed. But, through the favour of heaven, and the
 sounder policy and good sense of the present times, these
 penalties are now removed ; for, by an act of George III.
 passed in 1779, all that is now required is, “ I, A. B. do
 “ solemnly declare, in the presence of Almighty God, that
 “ I am a Christian and a Protestant, and, as such, that I be-
 “ lieve that the Scriptures of the old and new Testament,
 “ as commonly received among Protestant Churches, do
 “ contain the revealed will of God, and that I do receive
 “ the same as the rule of my doctrine and practice.”

† Defence, page 44.

hand, * who will give you, I hope, ample satisfaction on this head. To his instructions I commend you, Sir, wishing you, with great sincerity, abundant peace and truth.

* The Case of Subscription to explanatory Articles of Faith, as a Qualification for Admission into the Christian Ministry, &c. to which is added, The Speech of the Rev. John Alphonso Turretine, previous to the Abolition of all Subscriptions at Geneva. Translated, from a Manuscript in French, 1748, by Samuel Chandler, D. D.

T H E

Dissenting Gentleman's

T H I R D a n d L A S T

L E T T E R, &c.

S I R,

I HAVE read carefully your two Defences, and attentively weighed the reasons by which you farther press my conformity to your Church ; but I must still say, that, though I feel the attraction of worldly interest strongly operating with your arguments, and giving them great force, yet there is something more forcible, which draws a contrary way.

Were I to never live but in the present world, I would soon become your convert ; but, when I consider that the purity, simplicity, and liberty, of the gospel are a sacred deposit, committed to my trust, and that there is an allegiance I owe to Christ, as the only Lawgiver of the Church, for which I must hereafter be accountable before him, I cannot but think it my duty, and therefore, upon the whole, most certainly my interest also, to continue my separation, though attended with some worldly disadvantage and reproach.

The grounds of my dissent I have already laid before the world, to whose impartial consideration they

they are humbly submitted. "But (you complain) I have left unnoticed and untouched a great part of your Letters." This, indeed, I have done, and shall also of your Defence, a great part of both being futile, and of little moment to the merits of the cause before us. Debates of this kind, I knew, insensibly swell. I remarked, therefore, but upon a few of the many obnoxious passages with which your letters abound, that greater liberty might be left to present you with several strong, and to me unanswerable, arguments for dissenting from your Church, which you had artfully forborne to mention; and from which, though since held up before you, and peculiarly urged upon you, you turn gravely away, and will not be provoked to encounter their force.

I have pressed you with the constitution and frame of your Church; and have shewn you various points in which its structure and form was not only quite different from, but actually repugnant to, the Church of Jesus Christ; consequently, that it was not, could not be, any dangerous and damnable schism for the servants of Jesus Christ to separate and withdraw from it, as you had rashly affirmed. But to this grand and popular objection you have not made the least reply. It stands before you in full strength.

This charge of schism is rendered still more completely ridiculous if you will observe, that the very powers, which alone formed, and which alone govern your Church, have given us leave to withdraw from it. The very authority, which made your Church, and upon which alone it rests, hath allowed us to set up our separate Churches for worship; and hath taken those Churches, and the worship performed in them, under its immediate protection and care.

S E C T. I.

Of Church-power, and in whom lodged.

I HAVE frequently reminded you, and every attentive person must perceive, that the issue of the debate, between the Church and the Dissenters, depends absolutely and entirely upon this single point,—is there any other Lawgiver, or King, in the Church of God, besides Jesus Christ; or, is there not? Is there power and authority vested in any man, or in any body of men, to make and to enjoin new rites of Christian worship, and new terms of Christian fellowship, besides what Christ, the only Lawgiver, has himself made and enjoined; or, is there not? Could you but be engaged to give a plain and direct answer to this one point, it would soon end the debate. But, for reasons well known to yourself, and very obvious to the world, you are deaf to my repeated solicitations on this head; and will not, cannot be, either persuaded or provoked to speak your sentiments freely and openly upon it.

You strenuously contend that there is such a power, but are greatly at a loss, 1. where to place it: and, 2. how to limit and confine it. These are two things which it indispensibly lies upon you to fix clearly and to ascertain, before you can, with any grace, censure our separation as unjustifiable and wrong. But, though, in multiplying words, your talent is not common, and you expatiate diffusely upon things of little moment, yet here, where the point lies, and you saw, and even felt it, you artfully endeavour to evade it. However, with much difficulty, a few concessions are extorted from you, which, in part, shew the world your preposterous scheme, and which prove you to be really (as I shall presently shew) no advocate for, nor even a friend to, the true Church of England as by law established, but to be a betrayer, an opposer, of it, a dangerous underminer of its very basis and foundation; and that, if your principles were to be adopted, the Church would be presently overthrown.

overthrown, and its hierarchy and frame be utterly destroyed.

For, with regard to the first of the above points, viz. in whom this power of making and enjoining new ceremonies and rites of worship, and new terms of communion in the Church of Christ, is vested, you affirm, 1. "That it is not in the civil magistrate: he has no such power at all."* But, 2. "It is in the pastors and governors of the Church."† Now,

First, if it be not in the civil magistrate, (and he has, as you affirm, no such power at all,) the consequence is inevitable, that then the present established Church of England is illegally, unjustly, tyrannically, established: that it is an usurpation upon the rights of Christians, and upon the civil liberties of mankind: and that the very basis on which it stands, with its whole frame and constitution, are fundamentally, essentially, and notoriously, wrong. For, that the present Church of England was constituted, formed, and established, by the civil magistrate, and only by him, viz. by Queen Elizabeth and her parliament, every gentleman, not a perfect stranger to our history and constitution, indisputably knows. When we talk of the Church established by law, by what law, I pray, do we mean established? Is it not by a law enacted by the crown and parliament, and enacted by no authority, or power, but theirs? Is not the Act of Uniformity the grand pillar, or foundation, on which the Church of England rests? Was it not that alone which established its present liturgy, with all its ceremonies and forms? But by whom was that law made? Was it not by the civil magistrate, and made by him alone? the bishops in the house of lords, and the clergy in convocation, labouring earnestly against it. To say then, as you do, that the civil magistrate has no power to decree ceremonies and forms of worship, is to say that the Act of Uniformity was a tyrannical unrighteous act: that it was enacted by those who

* 1. Defence, pages 18, 19.

† Ibid. page 10.

had no power at all to do it: consequently, that the Church established by that law was an unwarrantable establishment, a spurious, illegal, thing. This is the destructive tendency, Sir, of your principles and scheme. You root up foundations, overthrow our constitution, and totally demolish the very Church you seem zealous to defend; so that you never spoke, perhaps, a truer word than when you were pleased to describe yourself as *a very sorry advocate for the Church.**

But you ask, "Why are we to regard only the establishment of Queen Elizabeth? Why is King Edward's reformation overlooked?"† Not for any advantage which you can possibly get by it: for, in the reformation under that prince also, "The majority of the bishops and inferior clergy (directly contrary to what you assert) were on the side of popery."‡ And it was the parliament alone, without the convocation, which then established the reformed liturgy and service-book.

But, at Queen Elizabeth's reformation, when the present Church was formed, erected, and established, you allege, "Though the bishops did, indeed, in some of her first years, oppose the re-

* Defence, page 128. Your learned Warburton, in his Alliance, &c. honourably and frankly owns, "That the Church hath resigned her independency, and made the magistrate her supreme head, without whose approbation and allowance she can direct, order, and decree, nothing." (page 87.) And that the clergy are now under the magistrate's direction," (page 74.)

Accordingly, an act, in the 2d parliament of Charles II. in Scotland, to which all the bishops concurred, and none of the laity protested against it, enacts, "That the discipline of the external government and polity of the Church is in his majesty, and his successors, as an inherent right of the crown; and that they may settle, enact, and limit, such constitutions, acts, and orders, concerning the administration of the external government of the Church, and the persons employed in the same, and concerning all ecclesiastical meetings, and matters to be proposed and determined therein, as they in their royal wisdom shall think fit."

† II. Defence, page 140.

‡ Neal's Hist. Purit. Vol. I. pages 45, 51.

"formation

“formation, which they had before approved, yet
 “they did not long stand out.”* That the ma-
 jority of the bishops did either before approve, or
 afterward comply, is, I believe, quite contrary to
 fact; † but whether true or not, is not at all to the
 point: for, when the reformation was actually ac-
 complished, and the Church, with its liturgy and
 forms, was established, their afterwards standing in
 or out, for a longer or shorter time, will be of no
 weight in your argument. The work was done
 without them; this is all I ask; and this you are
 forced to grant. The bishops then had no hand,
 no share at all, in making and establishing the pre-
 sent Church of England, but opposed it with all
 their might. It was done by the civil magistrate,
 (who had no power, you say, to do it,) and done
 by him alone. “At her majesty’s accession, and
 “even after religion was restored to the same state
 “as under King Edward, the universities were so
 “entirely lost, that there were scarcely two of the
 “same opinion with the reformers. As to the bi-
 “shops and clergy, (Bishop Cox adds,) they were
 “unanimous for popery, firm as a rock.”‡

“But, if the reformation was carried on, it was
 “not (say you) perfected without the bishops.” ||
 True, because it was never perfected at all. That
 glorious work remains to immortalise, perhaps,
 the names of its present governors. But, to what-
 ever perfection it hath been at all brought since
 its first establishment, it was brought only and en-
 tirely by the authority of the crown and parlia-
 ment, our excellent constitution acknowledging
 no legislative power, or authority, but theirs.**

“And,

* II. Defence, page 140.

† Only one bishop conformed himself to the queen’s
 commands, and was continued in his place, viz. Kitchen of
 Landaff.—Fuller’s Ch. Hist. Book ix. page 59, and Book
 vii. page 414.

‡ Neal’s Review, page 58. Vide also Fuller’s Ch. Hist.
 Book ix. page 56.

|| II. Defence, page 139.

** Synods and convocations have, in all ages of the
 Church, seldom done good; often much hurt; have gene-
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“And, as for the XXXIX Articles, these (you allege) were some years after passed in a convocation of the bishops and clergy.”* Whether they were passed in a convocation or not, with regard to their authority, is of no moment at all, their unanimous assent adding not the least grain to their obligation on the subject, nor their most zealous dissent in the least detracting from it. But did not your heart smite you, Sir, at the very mention of these articles? the XXXIVth of which declares expressly against you, “That your Church ceremonies were ordained by the authority of the civil magistrate.” The same also your XXXth canon.† You have several times subscribed the truth of this article, and sworn to this canon. With what countenance then durst you thus publicly oppugn and contradict it? and, in open defiance of our articles and statutes, our constitutions and canons, and your own repeated subscriptions, presumptuously declare, “That the civil magistrate has no power nor authority to decree ceremonies in religion?” Do you solemnly subscribe one thing, and publicly teach another! Where is the consistency or the integrity of such a conduct? But let us see where you lodge this power.

rally obstructed, not promoted, reformation, which hath mostly been carried on by lay councils and hands. The sentiments of a learned father, who had seen much of these Church proceedings, may not be unworthy to be here remembered. *Sic sentio, si verum, scribendum est, &c.* My opinion is this, if I may be allowed to speak the truth, that all conventions of bishops are to be avoided: for, I never saw any good come of any synod; nor that it did not much more mischief than it hindered. For, truth, in such assemblies, is generally borne down by a spirit of strife and vain glory. Greg. Nazian. Epist. ad Procop.

* II. Defence, page 140.

† “We hold it the part of every private man, both minister and other, reverently to retain the use of the ceremonies prescribed by public authority; considering, that things, of themselves indifferent, do, in some sort, alter their natures when they are either commanded or forbidden by a lawful magistrate, and may not be omitted at every man’s pleasure, contrary to the law.” Canon xxx.

Secondly.

Secondly. They are the Church's pastors and governors, whom you are pleased to invest with it: * that is, I suppose, you mean (for, you are extremely shy of explications) its bishops and clergy. But you have not deigned to shew me one text of Scripture, nor one statute, or act of parliament, which vests them with this power. I have shewn you several of both, which expressly divest them of it, and utterly deny them any such jurisdiction or authority.

But, were we to grant you, "That these pastors and governors have authority from God to make new ceremonies and rites, and to ordain, in Christ's Church, new terms of communion;" will you tell me whether this power is vested solely in the bishops; or, must their deans and chapters act in concert with them? Has every bishop, within his diocese, this power from God to enjoin new ceremonies and rites; or, may his archbishop controul him? This latter I suppose not: for, archbishops, you own, not to be of apostolic, but of modern, institution; whereas bishops, it should seem, are the lineal successors and representatives of the apostles; in them, therefore, the apostolic power of governing the Churches rests. This, then, which is of divine, ought not to be controuled by that which is but of late and human, institution; therefore the bishop of every diocese, as its pastor and governor, has authority from God to decree in his Church what ceremonies and rites, and to make what terms of communion, he thinks edifying and fit. Nor has any neighbouring bishop, no, nor any power upon earth, authority to controul them. For, as the apostles were all equal, their successors, the bishops, must also be equal: and, as the former were not accountable to any temporal prince for their jurisdiction in the Church of Christ, the same exemption may their descendants and representatives also claim. How excellent a scheme of government and holy discipline is this! With what beauty and uniformity,

* 4. Defence, page 10.

unity and peace, is it calculated to bless the Church! as we shall presently see. But,

Thirdly. Acknowledging this high power to be really vested in the Church's bishops, as governors and pastors of it, I again ask, how far does it extend? Is it limited or unlimited? May they enjoin whatever rites they think decent and ornamental, and decree whatever ceremonies or new terms of communion they judge to be conducive to the edification of the Church? As they have now, in the Church of England, decreed, we will say, only four ceremonies to give additional beauty and splendour to its public worship, may they not, if they think it farther conducive to this worthy end, decree four, or even forty, more? Yes, and make that forty four hundred, if they should suppose them to be useful, and calculated to promote decency and order in the worship of their respective flocks. But do you not plainly see, Sir, how dangerous a power this is? a power which, in all ages, hath proved the bane of the Christian Church! A floodgate which hath let in a dreadful deluge of animosities, corruptions, and superstitions, upon it! Hence sprung that enormous mass of profane and foolish rites which, to the scandal of the Christian name, now grievously oppresses both the Greek and the Romish Churches. One bishop, or perhaps a junto of bishops, fancying that there ought to be a trine-immersion in baptism, another the signation of the cross, another an unction with oil, another milk and honey, and the imposition of hands immediately after it; another insufflation, or breathing upon the person's face, to exorcise the devil; another washing of hands before prayers;—hence, also, praying towards the East, sponsors in baptism, kneeling at the Lord's supper, first the veneration, then the adoration, of relics and of images, which, though they were at first erected only as memorials of some saints, soon after became the objects of religious worship. Thus, I say, that inundation of abominable corruptions, which at present overwhelms the Greek and Roman Churches, gradu-

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ally came in at this very breach you are now zealously maintaining, namely, *the bishop's power to decree rites and ceremonies in the Church.*

It is a most dangerous and important power, not fit to be trusted, and therefore, we may be assured, never was trusted, with any fallible uninspired men. Jesus Christ, surely the supreme bishop and only head of his Church, well knew what institutions were most for its edification, and what ceremonies and rites would best promote the order and decency of its worship; and, either by myself, or by his inspired apostles, has left a perfect plan of both. For any weak and uninspired men therefore to rise up in after-ages, and fancy that they can improve the scheme of worship which Christ hath left,—that they can add greatly to its beauty, its splendour, and perfection, by some ceremonies of their own,—is certainly a rude invasion of Christ's throne, which every sober Christian ought highly to detest.

But, with great acuteness, you observe, "That, though those Church-governors have power to decree ceremonies and rites, yet not fopperies and superstitions." This is extremely pleasant! But, when I ask you by what criterion I am to distinguish rites from fopperies, and the ceremonies from superstitions, you will not satisfy my curiosity;—and no wonder; for, I defy all the common sense and ingenuity of the nation (to borrow one of your own expressions) to shew the consecration of earth, to cover the body when dead, to be an edifying and decent rite; but the consecration of water, to sprinkle it when living, to be a ridiculous and foolish foppery. I defy any man to say, why spittle and salt, in baptism, are not ceremonies as instructive as the sign of the cross; and, why a bishop may not now continue the absurd antient custom of exorcising the devil before baptism, as well as the laying on of hands after it, so as thereby to impart the graces of the Holy Spirit, which, you say, he does in confirmation.

Superstition, Sir, is ever restless, insatiable, in-
croaching. Every zealous bishop will be ambiti-

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ous of adding some rite or ceremony of his own to beautify divine worship, and render it more brilliant. Thus, when your holy Bishop Laud was governor of this Church, you had lighted candles upon its altars, copes for the priests with crucifixes and images of the Trinity upon them, consecrated knives to cut the sacramental bread, incense-pots, canisters for wafers lined with cambric-lace, with a deal of other furniture, all solemnly consecrated for the service of Almighty God, and for the comfort, instruction, and edification, of his Church, to exalt and enliven the *beauties of holiness* therein. And, had it not been for the noble and heroic stand which the Puritans and their successors have constantly made against this rite-making spirit, there is no reason to doubt that the Church of England, by this time, had fallen little short in these holy decorations and additional splendours, of the Church of Moscow or of Rome.

I have dwelt longer upon this point, because it is undoubtedly the capital and fundamental one on which the debate between the Church and the Dissenters entirely turns. Prove your Church, Sir, to have this power and authority, from God, which she exercises and claims,—a *power to decree new rites and ceremonies in Christian worship*, to make *new terms of communion*, and to *determine controversies of faith*,—and you need give yourself no farther trouble: all other things in controversy, sponsors, absolution, the sacramental test, and every thing else, shall be immediately given up. Make good but this one point, and, if your Church commands us to sign ourselves all over with a significant and instructive cross, we will reverently do it. If it bids us worship towards the East, and to think the omnipresent Deity to be more there than in the West, and to bow at the name of Jesus, we will humbly submit: or, if it requires us to believe that an amorous Devil was forced away from his beloved maid by the fumes of a fish's liver; or, that the most profligate wretch that lives, if the king gives him a post, has a right to eat at the Lord's table, and that, when he dies

He rests in Christ, and is taken to God in mercy,—we will cordially believe it all. There is nothing your Church can enjoin or decree, but you shall find the Dissenters will dutifully submit to it, when you have once clearly shewn it to have this power from God; and have told us plainly, and without reserve, what you mean by the Church; and distinctly pointed out who the persons are in whom this power resides.

It is, indeed, consummately ridiculous in you, Sir, to talk of the “Church’s jurisdiction and authority over Dissenters,—of the subjection we owe it,—of the damnableness of the sin of refusing obedience to it,” when you have not yet told us, and cannot openly and plainly tell us, who and what it is you mean by the Church: Or, who the persons are to whom God hath committed this high and important trust? Is it the king and parliament; or, is it not? Is it the clergy met in convocation; or, is it not? Is it each bishop in his respective diocese, by himself alone, or in conjunction with his Clergy; or, is it not? Is it the whole body of Christian people, the congregation of the faithful; or, is it not? Open yourself freely, Sir, and be not afraid of truth. Truth will never hurt you. It is a most innocent and lovely thing: it may rob you of some emoluments and possessions of a worldly nature; but, be assured, it will give you something more substantial in their stead. Be ingenuous then, and tell Dissenters in whom God hath lodged this power to which you say they owe subjection; and, by revolting from which, they are guilty of a dangerous and damnable sin. If you write again, but will not explain yourself distinctly on this point, you yield the cause to us before the world. You make it evident that you write neither for our conviction nor your own, but that you have something else in view besides finding out the Truth. That something, perhaps, you may find, but it will continue with you but for a moment; whereas, if you find and do the will of God, it will give you a possession that will endure for ever!

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S E C T. II.

Of the Sacramental Test.

THAT the law called the Test is not, as you suggest, the *innocent occasion only*, but the plain, the notorious, the culpable, cause of those prostitutions of the holy sacrament *which*, you say, *you see with concern*, what room can there be for any rational doubt? For, does not the very design and intent of that law, at least as it is now applied, prostitute and pervert the sacrament to an use not only different from, but directly repugnant to, that for which it was instituted and designed by Jesus Christ? The Christian law enjoins it as a mean, and with intent, to unite and coalesce Christians. The Test-law enjoins it as a mean, and with intent, to discriminate and divide them. For the ministers of Jesus Christ then to be advocates for a law which prostitutes and perverts a holy sacrament of his religion; yea, a law which makes themselves the very instruments and tools of this shameful prostitution, is such a violation of their character, such a prostitution of their sacred office, such a betraying the solemn trust committed to them by God, for which they must give an account to the Chief Pastor at his coming, as cannot but greatly shock an attentive beholder, and ought, in my opinion, to give the most painful apprehensions to themselves.

“ These prostitutions (you assure us) you do “ see with concern, but yet cannot be for the “ repeal, because you think it inconsistent with “ the preservation of the Church.” * What Church, alas! must that be, which cannot be preserved but by an acknowledged prostitution and perversion of a holy sacrament! Surely it cannot be the Church of Christ! Let not Christians *do evil that good may come*: such carnal and

* II. Defence, page 8.

corrupt policy ever defeats itself; and its *condemnation is just.* *

You correct me for saying, that, by the force of this law, multitudes of needy persons are *compelled to come to the Lord's table*, and cry, "God forbid that the temptations even of poverty and want should be esteemed to have the nature of force and compulsion; for, in that case, they would have no guilt at all upon their consciences." So then, you can bring off, I find, the young adulterer from any guilt with the lewd woman, Prov. vii. 21, because *with the flattery of her lips she forced him*. I thought I had written to a bachelor of divinity, to a gentleman who was no stranger to Scripture-language, and who knew what it meant when the *King commands his servants to compel the guests to come in*, Luke xiv. 23. For the like use of the word *compel* you may consult Galat. ii. 14, vi. 12. See also Luke xiv. 18, 20. in the original.

That the priest has no power to refuse the Lord's supper to the vilest person, that demands it as a qualification for a post, you care not to admit, and ask, "Is there any law which forbids the curate to repel him from the Lord's table?" † Yes, by the equitable construction of the law called the Test, most certainly there is; for, the same law, which requires under severe penalties all persons in posts to receive the Lord's supper according to the usage of the Church of England, does, by indisputable consequence, require some one to give it. If it must be received by them, it must surely be given to them. To suppose the legislature to have obliged them under heavy pains to partake of the holy sacrament, but to have obliged none, upon their demand, to administer it to them, is to suppose it acting a most absurd and unjustifiable part, which is not to be imagined. Who then is the person to whom, according to law, a man that wants the sacramental qualification is to apply for that service?

* Rom. iii. 8. † II. Defence, page 31.

Undoubtedly

Undoubtedly his parish-priest, who is appointed and paid by law for the performance of the several offices which the state requires of him, of which this is plainly one. Whatever power therefore the rubric gave the curate to *repel open evil-livers from the table of the Lord*, before the Test-act took place, it is now, in cases of qualification, unquestionably superseded, and the rubric virtually repealed. For, when a new law enjoins what is repugnant to an old one, that old law is to be considered as so far set aside. And, as for the "Damages to which the priest is liable to be condemned for refusing the sacrament," these the law, it is presumed, will give according to the loss which the person can make appear he hath sustained by that refusal, which, in many cases, may be great,—more perhaps than the priest is worth.

"The oath of abjuration you esteem quite a parallel to the sacramental test, and urge that, "it one should be repealed because it lays men under violent temptations to prostitute their consciences, so also ought the other."* No! cases, if duly weighed, will be found to differ widely. An oath of fidelity to the government that employs us in posts of influence and power, is a security, or pledge, evidently founded in the reason of things: it has been the practice immemorial of all civilized nations: its necessity, or great expediency, manifestly arises from the nature of civil government: it is therefore reasonably presumed to be the will and institution of God, the author of civil government, and was instituted for purposes of a political, or civil, kind. Here, then, is no prostitution, no perversion, of this sacred rite, when the oath is tendered to a man at his entrance upon a post of trust; and, if a needy Jacobite takes it to the pollution of his conscience, himself only can be blamed: the law that ordered it is clear. But can this, in any sense, be said concerning the sacramental test? Hath *this*

* Defence, page 6.

been an instrument for the support of civil government in any kingdom of the Christian world besides our own? Hath God, the author of civil government, given the least intimation of his intending that it should have such a guard? Had Christ, the institutor of this rite, the least intention, or design, that it should be thus used and applied, be made an engine and tool of state, an instrument to discriminate between Christian and Christian, to raise some to posts of power in the kingdoms of this world, and to fix upon others (men equally virtuous) brands of odium and disgrace? Had he not unquestionably a quite contrary design? You know, Sir, that he had. Does he look down with pleasure, think you, upon the kingdom and Church, where he sees his name and his institutions thus openly violated, perverted, profaned; his priests *liking to have it so*, approving, espousing, defending, the abuse? I own I cannot think it it; and, should any man express a fear that this is not the least of those national sins which expose us to the divine displeasure; that it is a public violation of that righteousness and piety which alone *can exalt a people*; a blemish, a disease, which preys upon the body politic; and, if it does not threaten its dissolution, yet greatly impairs its strength; I confess, I could not prove his fears to be weak or superstitious: For, if the Church of Corinth was *severely chastened* for not making a due distinction between the sacrament and their common meals, and not eating it *as the Lord's supper*, I see not but the Church of England may have something also to fear on account of those perversions and prostitutions which, you own, *you see with concern*; by which this sacrament is used not only not according to, but directly against, its primitive institution; to a purpose, and for an end which quite opposes and subverts one principal design for which our divine Master appointed this sacred rite.

High offices and court-employments, I have acknowledged, might be apt to corrupt Dissenters, as every one knows them to have this influence upon

upon the human mind : though, therefore, as a Briton and as a Christian, I wish earnestly the repeal; yet, as a Dissenter, I profess no solicitude about it. “ But I ought not then (you say) to “ strenuously to plead for their being admitted to “ such employments, but to be very solicitous “ against it.” Review, Sir, in less haste, and you will find, I am so far from pleading strenuously for their admission into such employments, that I have not so much as pleaded for it at all! All I plead for is, the removal of the incapacity under which they unjustly lie, the breaking a disgraceful yoke which the Test hath put upon their necks, and the restoring them to their native freedom, and honour, and right : that the state may have liberty, if it thinks it needs their faithful services, to avail itself of them ; and that it be left to their liberty, their virtue, their choice, either to accept or to refuse posts of trust under the government, and that they may not stand branded and stigmatized before the world as persons incapable and unworthy of such trusts.*

S E C T.

* In the late excellent comment on Warburton's Alliance, &c. the passage of my second letter, to which this refers, is not only mistaken, but not faithfully and justly quoted. In the letter it stands thus, page 62. “ Though I think this law a most unrighteous restraint “ upon us, and an undoubted violation of our natural “ rights, yet I am far from being persuaded that its repeal “ would be of the least service to our interest as Dissenters. “ I have often doubted whether there is not too much truth “ in what you say, that *high trusts and court-employments would “ be extremely apt to corrupt us*, and that it would really rather “ injure than strengthen our interest. I have never, therefore, as a Dissenter, been at all solicitous for the “ repeal.”

Note, This is expressed only as a doubt, or suspicion ; but the author of that Comment hath made it say, in strong and positive terms, (page 123,) “ That a “ repeal of the Test and Corporation Acts would really be injurious to the interest of Protestant Dissenters ; or, that I am persuaded it would rather “ injure than strengthen our interest.” Which is giving the passage a very different turn.

And, when that gentleman asks, “ Is there an absolute “ incapacity.

S E C T. III.

Of our CONSTITUTION in Church and State.

YOU seem a little displeased at my doubting
 “ Whether the Church were an essential and
 “ a half-part of our constitution? and whether
 “ Church and state here in England are so incor-
 “ porated and united as that, like the married
 “ pair, they must stand or fall together? And
 “ allege, that, in all the conversation as well as
 “ in the writings of Dissenters and others, we read
 “ and hear continually of the ecclesiastical as dis-
 “ tinguished from the civil constitution: yea, even

“ incapacity of being virtuous in high stations?” I an-
 swer, no. But if there be a great danger of being vicious,
 this will justify surely an indifference, a non-solicitude,
 about them; and will excuse, at least, a doubt, a fear, as
 to the event, And, when he farther asks, “ Would any
 “ man think his conduct justifiable, should he refuse a
 “ large estate merely because of the greater danger of his
 “ being corrupted by it?” I answer, 1. There have been
 instances of such refusal recorded, and, perhaps, justly, as
 instances of heroic virtue. But, 2. To refuse it, when of-
 fered, is a thing extremely different from being solicitous
 to obtain it. Public offices and trusts, when offered by
 those in power, ought not to be refused by such as think
 themselves capable of rightly discharging them, because
 this would be to reject an opportunity of public service, to
 which their country calls them. But this may be done
 without a solicitude to procure them.

The passage, on which this ingenious author has stepped
 aside to remark, speaks but the very same sentiment which
 himself has elsewhere, perhaps, more strongly expressed,
 Comment, &c. page 138. “ An indifferency to the ho-
 “ nours, riches, and pleasures, of this world, a contempt
 “ of and victory over them, is the independency and su-
 “ premacy which the true religion and Church can boast,
 “ the resignation (or loss) of which must be infinitely
 “ dangerous to her, her poison, her death-wound,” Again,
 page 131. “ Though it may be thought I am pleading for
 “ the introduction of Protestant Dissenters into places of
 “ profit and trust, I am fully persuaded that their having
 “ such places would not make them more religious men,
 “ nor, from numbers of them so employed, would their
 “ societies appear with greater reputation as religious
 “ societies.”

“ from

“ from the throne and both houses of parliament,
 “ we often hear of our constitution in Church and
 “ state.”* But divest yourself, for a moment, of
 worldly attachments, which insensibly warp the
 mind, and you will see it, I believe, to be a very
 rational doubt ; for, our ecclesiastical, however it
 may be distinguished in common language, is re-
 ally no other than a civil, constitution.† It is a
 system, or frame, contrived, disposed, and enacted
 by the civil magistrate, as much as the constitu-
 tion of the treasury, of the army, or of the courts
 of Westminster-hall. These all, Sir, have their
 constitutions (that is, their several parts of the
 public business assigned them to dispatch, and their
 several officers, and forms, and methods, of pro-
 ceeding in them) as really, as truly, and as much,
 as the Church. The army is the constitution and
 order of the civil magistrate relating to the direc-
 tion of the military force. The treasury is the
 constitution and order of the same magistrate re-
 lating to the collection and disposal of the public
 money. The courts of Westminster-hall are the
 constitution of the same magistrate for the dispen-
 sing of public justice. And the Church is the con-
 stitution and order of the same magistrate relating
 to the manner in which the public worship is to be
 performed. The officers in each are all entirely
 made, instructed, controuled, by the power of
 the civil magistrate. It is by his authority alone
 that they are all qualified and impowered to act in
 their respective stations ; and it is in that manner,
 and by those rules only, which his wisdom hath
 prescribed, that, in all their respective offices, they
 severally proceed.

You cannot therefore deny that the ecclesiastical
 is really no other than a branch of the civil consti-
 tution ; and that what you call the Church is in
 truth no more an essential, much less a half, part,
 of our constitution than the treasury, the army, or
 either of the courts of Westminster-hall. If,

* Letter. I. page 9. II. Defence, pages 9, 10.

† This I have fully proved in my first letter, page 16,
 17, to which no reply has been made.

therefore,

therefore, the wisdom of the legislature should think proper to new-form any of these constitutions, (for instance, the method of dispensing justice in any of our law-courts,—which courts, by the way, are all of much longer standing than the constitution of our present Church,) would you not smile to hear some zealous gentlemen of the long-robe stand forth and insist, *That these courts were an essential and a halfpart of the constitution; and that, therefore, whoever moved for, or so much as wished, an alteration in either of them, could not be safely trusted with any share of the public power, and was really in truth an enemy to the state?* The learned gentlemen of that robe, Sir, no doubt, equally smile to hear you thus reasoning as to the Church.*

By “the constitution in Church and state, “then, of which we often hear even in speeches “and addresses from and to the throne,” can

* That the account here given of the nature and constitution of the Church of England agrees with the sentiments of our first reformers, the founders and framers of it, appears from the determination of a select assembly of them, convened at Windsor by King Edward VI. by whom (as may be concluded from Archbishop Cranmer’s manuscript) it was declared:

“That all Christian princes have committed to them, “immediately from God, the whole cure of their subjects, “as well concerning the administration of God’s word for “the cure of souls, as concerning the ministration of “things of political and civil governance. In both these “ministrations they must have sundry ministers under them, “to supply that which is appointed to their several offices.

“The civil ministers, under the king’s majesty, in this “realm, be those whom it shall please his highness, for “the time, to put in authority under him; as, for example, the lord-chancellor, lord-treasurer, lord-admiral, &c.

“The ministers of God’s word, under his majesty, be “the bishops, parsons, vicars, and such other priests as be “appointed by his highness to that ministration; as, for “example, the bishop of Canterbury, the bishop of Winchester, the parson of Croywick, &c.

“All the said officers and ministers, as well of the one “sort as of the other, be appointed, assigned, and elected, “in every place, by the laws and orders of kings and “princes.” Vide an Extract from Abp. Cranmer’s M. S. Stillington. Iren. Part II. Ch. viii. page 391.

he meant nothing else than *that order, or form, of government, respecting all persons and things, which is established by the laws and customs of this realm.* A constitution, by which the king or queen, as the supreme head of the Church is the fountain of all power and jurisdiction therein; authorised to instruct, over-rule, and controul, all the archbishops, bishops, and priests, in this kingdom, in all their most spiritual and ecclesiastical concerns:—a constitution, by which a lady, when such fills the throne, is impowered to compose public prayers for the Church, to stop all preaching therein, to fill vacant bishoprics with what persons she pleases, or not to fill them at all,* to direct all ecclesiastics what they shall or shall not preach; and, even in the most abstruse and metaphysical points, to be the final judge of heresy; whose judgement must stand as to what shall or shall not, be deemed heresy in this Church, even though it happen to contradict that of all her learned clergy in convocation convened.

Thus that renowned lady, Queen Elizabeth, in the fulness of her ecclesiastical power, herself composed a prayer, Archdeacon Eachard † informs us, for the use of a great number of her nobility and gentry, as well as her soldiers and sailors, in the expedition against Cadiz, directing it to be used daily in every ship. And, by virtue of her supremacy, she might, I presume, if she had pleased, (as any future queen may,) compose prayers for the use of the archbishops, bishops, and all the clergy of the land; and enjoin their solemn use every Sunday in the Church; and that the use of such devout feminine compositions no bishop nor

* Any of the bishoprics may be kept vacant by the princes of England, as those of Ely and Oxford were by Queen Elizabeth; the latter had no bishop for 22 years. The parliament dissolved the rich bishopric of Durham in King Edward VI.'s reign; and gave the profits to the crown. And it had remained so to this day, probably, had not Popish Queen Mary restored it.

† Hist. of England, page 367, Col. I.

priest can agreeably to our constitution, in any wise refuse.

The same royal lady, by virtue of her proclamation only, put an entire stop to all preaching of ministers and others, throughout the kingdom; and the people were charged *to hear no other preaching or doctrine but the epistle and gospel of the day and the ten commandments, without any exposition, or paraphrase, thereon.* And, should any future queen think proper to do the same, I humbly apprehend that all her bishops and clergy are, by our constitution in Church and state, obliged to obey.

By the same constitution, King Charles I. put forth a proclamation, (if a woman had worn the crown, she also might have done it, as any future queen may,) commanding the clergy not to preach or dispute about Arminianism. The learned Bishop Davenport, presuming to preach upon the doctrine of predestination, was forced to appear upon his knees before the council; and, being severely reprimanded, hardly so escaped, though he alleged he had preached nothing but the XVIIth article of the Church of England. The king, not only in his superior, but supreme ecclesiastic, wisdom, told him, "*The doctrine of predestination was too big for the people's understandings, and that he was resolved not to permit that controversy to be discussed in the pulpit.*"*

What authority our constitution gives queens to judge in points of heresy, (the most deep and mysterious points,) and to controul the proceedings of the most venerable and holy synod which the clergy of this kingdom can possibly compose, has been observed in the case of Mr. Whiston, whom Queen Anne, by her sole authority, skreened

* Vide Fuller's Church Hist. Book. IX. page 138.

The same blessed martyr, by his royal mandate only, without any trial, sequestered and suspended, from the execution of his office, good Archbishop Abbot, for refusing his licence and approbation to a most vile and scandalous sermon of Sibthorp.

from

from the heavy censure of her learned convocation. Her single judgement, in the balance of our apostolic and excellently-constituted Church, being of far greater weight than that of the united bishops and clergy of the whole land. This account you attempt to invalidate by calling it a misrepresentation: but the truth of it is not to be disputed: it is attested by two of your own learned and reverend historians, Burnet and Tindal, in their accounts of the year 1711.

Again, by our present constitution, the king alone, or at least by consent of parliament, can undoubtedly divide the twenty-six bishoprics, into which this kingdom is at present cantoned, into as many hundred; and thus render them more like the bishoprics of the first ages, when every Christian bishop took the oversight of no more than he could personally know, and than could communicate at one table. He can also new-frame the whole order of public worship, can abolish its present articles, ceremonies, and forms, and substitute new ones in their stead. By the same power he may dispose of that part of the public treasure by which the clergy are maintained in a juster and more equitable manner. He may reduce the shameful exorbitance by which some members of that great, and in itself venerable and useful, body wanton in vast affluence, indolence, and sloth, (which is perhaps what you call *snuggles*,) whilst others, equally virtuous and learned, but much more laborious, wear away their lives in obscurity and want.—This, Sir, without question, is our present constitution in Church and State.

S E C T. IV.

Of SPONSORS in BAPTISM.

YOUR defence of sponsors in baptism comes next to be considered. Here you affirm, "That I represent the use of sponsors as a very mysterious point, as an unaccountable, inexplicable, absurd, and unlawful, thing:"* an assertion which escaped from you in the ardour of your zeal, but which has really no foundation. The use of sponsors, in all cases of the parents incapacity, I entirely approve; and expressly told you, *That, in such cases, the Dissenters also use them.*† You could not, without extreme inattention, but see that it was "*The setting aside the parents, the forbidding them to stand forth and engage solemnly for the religious education of the child, and the receiving the child to baptism upon account of its own faith and its own promise expressed by its sureties,*" that I thus represented as unlawful and absurd. And though I have the pleasure now to find you tacitly giving up, though not honourably retracting that precipitant expression, "That godfathers are not an useful only but even a *necessary* institution," yet scarcely without pain can I see you so grievously embarrassed in accounting for the answers made at the font. These, you still insist, are not the sureties. but the child's answers. But your attempts to explain how a child who cannot believe does yet profess faith,—how the infant, who in no sense can promise or engage, does yet really and in good sense vow and engage,—how the babe, who has no thought, no purposes, nor desires, may yet express these by the mouth of its sureties; and how these expressions of what it hath not, and cannot possibly have, are accepted by the Church as a proper token that it hath them, and as a solid ground of baptism:—this is still to me, and I believe to all the world, as inexplicable and

* II. Defence, page 24.

† Letter II. page 34.

mysterious as it was before you undertook to unveil and explain it.

Nay, the mystery grows upon you by attempting to unfold it; for, you declare "That the ground and foundation of infants being received to baptism, in your Church, is the promise of God to *believers and their seed*."* Observe, then, it is the faith of the parent that entitles the child to baptism; but, if the ground of its being received to this Christian sacrament be the faith of its parent only, why do you receive it as if upon account of its own faith? Why interrogate the poor babe?—*Dost thou believe? Wilt thou be baptized?* Again, if the parent's faith be that which entitles his child to baptism, why is not the parent suffered to stand forth and to profess his faith as a qualification for the baptism of his child? Why is the child called upon vicariously to declare, that *itself* believes, that *itself* desires baptism, &c. when all the world sees that it neither knows, nor does, nor can, in any sense at all, do, either of these things?

You endeavour to explain the matter "by an infant in the lord of the manor's court, who, by his attorney, is admitted to his copyhold, and covenants to do homage for the same! or, by an infant-king, who hath some one of the nobility, who, in his name, and for his benefit, is appointed to take the coronation oath, and thereby oblige him to observe the laws and protect his subjects."† But these instances avail you nothing. For,

1. The child, when admitted, by his attorney in the lord's court, to his copyhold, does not covenant to do homage for the same. That he does not covenant, I prove by a very plain and incontestible argument, which is, that he cannot. There is no sense at all, no religious or moral sense, in which the infant can with any truth or propriety be said to covenant. No: it is the attorney, and he alone, that covenants to perform

* II. Defence, page 28.

† Ibid. Page 129.

the homage. And, in the case of a minor king, when one of the nobility takes the coronation-oath in his name, or stead, (if any such ceremony be ever performed,) he does not, cannot, in any sense, *thereby oblige the royal infant to observe the laws and protect the subject*;—not whilst an infant, because, not being a moral agent, he cannot possibly be capable of moral obligation: nor, when he comes of age, because the promise, or oath, of one rational moral agent can never properly oblige another, if that other was not at all conscious of, nor gave his consent to, it. The whole nature and extent of the obligation in that case is unquestionably this: the nobleman, who takes the oath as personating the king, and who during the minority is vested with the regal power, swears that he himself will, in the exercise of that power, observe the laws and protect the subjects. The obligation of this oath, which is made by himself only, can extend only to himself, and it lasts only so long as he continues vested with the regal power. But, when the royal infant comes of age, and assumes the power into his own hands, he must personally take the oath, or some way or other signify his solemn assent to it, in order to his being laid under any real obligation by it. And then,

2. These cases also widely differ from that of the baptised infant, because, in both of them, there are several important services and actions to be done (which must be performed by some one) whilst the minority continues. In the first, there are suits and services in the lord's court, and quit-rents to be paid. In the other, there are acts of regal power to be continually exerted for the due government of the people, even whilst the infancy remains. These, therefore, being indispensibly necessary to be done, and the infant being utterly incapable of doing them, hence arises a necessity of some person's undertaking to discharge these offices for him, and to act in the infant's stead. But, is there any thing like this in the case of baptised infants? Is there any service, or homage, any
faith

faith or vows, which God expects from them whilst their infancy lasts? You know there is not. If God then expects no such services from the infant, why are sponsors called forth to pretend to perform them for it! and this when the pretence is in every view ridiculous; because, in things of religion, it is utterly absurd for one man to pretend to promise to repent, to believe, in the name of another.

One principal design of the baptism of a child, you own, is, "that some security be given, some solemn stipulation be made before the Church, for its religious education." Who, then, I pray, so proper to give this security as the person to whom its education is committed? Whom should the Church bring under the engagement of a solemn vow, or covenant, for this purpose? Strangers who, perhaps, never saw the child; or who, when the ceremony is past, will never see it more! or the parents, in whose family it is to grow up, and under whose eye it is to be formed!

You do not pretend that there is in your baptism of an infant any explicit stipulation besides what the child itself makes, yet, notwithstanding this, you consider the sureties as accepting it "by standing there, and receiving a solemn charge concerning the religious education of the child."* But do you not know, Sir, that this is no stipulation, neither explicit or implicit. A stipulation is a mutual promise. But, though the sponsors stand there, and hear the admonition, no answer, no word, no token, is required of them by which to signify their solemn purpose and engagement to obey it. Accordingly, when they return home, they too generally with great levity *shake off the charge again, and throw it over to the parent.*† And thus the solemnity of the institution dwindles into a mere trifling, if not a ludicrous, ceremony, and your boasted *double-security* still remains no real security at all.

* II. Defence, page 36.

† Com. to the Temp. page 612.

Dr. Nichol's account of this apparently absurd and mysterious affair, to which I referred you, is undoubtedly far more defensible, though quite contrary to yours, viz. "Baptizatorum fidem religiose in se recipiebant, eos sincere omnia in evangelio revelata credere, et subsequentes vitæ actiones juxta Christi normam directuros esse."* *That the sureties religiously engaged for the faith of the baptised, that they should sincerely believe all that was revealed in the gospel, and direct the subsequent actions of their lives by the law of Christ.* This you call *my translation*; and tax me before the world "for having translated it wrong to serve my purpose."† It will give you, surely, some confusion and pain to be told, that *this is not mine*, but it is the Doctor's own translation, or that of his learned friend who published his Defence, &c. And I appeal to the public, whether the Doctor's or your's be the proper rendering of the words. Is *recipere in se fidem baptizatorum*,—to make a solemn declaration and profession touching the faith of the baptised? Besides, the Doctor was too wise a person to represent the sureties, as you would have him, as *making a solemn declaration that the infant did sincerely believe all that is revealed in the gospel*, because this, he well knew, was what no wise or honest man could possibly declare concerning any infant upon earth. He knew it absurd to affirm, *that the infant did believe at all*; much more to affirm, *that it sincerely believed*; but more even yet, *that it sincerely believed all that is revealed in the gospel*. In whatever light, therefore, you view it, it appears to be perfectly mysterious. And this business of the sureties and their answers at the font, after all your pains to clear it up, is still covered with dark and impenetrable clouds; which, till some new light shall arise, one may venture to prophesy, will never be dispelled. It turns the ceremony of your baptism into little else than a solemn farce, and furnishes unbelievers with too just an occasion of ridicule and contempt.

* Nich. Def. Part II. page 273. † II Defence, page 26.

S E C T. V.

Of CONFIRMATION.

AS to the ceremony of Confirmation, you are still so cautious as not to assert any scriptural or apostolic authority for its practice ; but yet you ask “ If both the ordinary and extraordinary gifts of the spirit were communicated by the apostles by imposition of hands, why may we not expect that the ordinary ones will be still communicated by the same administration ? And why should we not continue that administration in the Church in hope and expectation of them ? ” * By these ordinary gifts, as you fully explain yourself, you mean, what are usually called, the *graces of the Spirit*, even the *spirit of love and of a sound mind*. For, you add, “ If this spirit of love and of a sound mind was given to Timothy by imposition of hands in his ordination, why may it not be done by the same ceremony in confirmation ? ” I am sorry there is a protestant divine in this kingdom capable of asking such a question as this. For, this *spirit of love and of a sound mind*, which you encourage us to expect from the laying on of the bishop’s hands, is one of the sublimest gifts conferred upon the human race by the gospel of Christ. A gift which far excels an ability to speak with tongues, a faith that can remove mountains, a power to cast out devils, to heal all manner of diseases, or even to raise the dead. The *spirit of love and of a sound mind* far excels them all ; and yet this, it seems, we may now expect by the laying on of the bishop’s hands ! Blessed episcopacy, indeed, if it carries with it such gifts ! But how foolish and wild is the claim, if neither scripture nor reason lend it the least support !

I must also observe, that, though this gift was conferred on Timothy at his ordination, by the

* II. Defence, page 38.

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I must also observe, that, though this gift was conferred on Timothy at his ordination, by the

* II. Defence, page 38.

laying on of the apostle's hands, it does not follow that the same gifts may be expected in confirmation from the hands of our present bishops? Is there power in their lordships' fingers to convey so divine a blessing on the head on which they rest? You should know, Sir, that the learned prelates of your Church abhor the presumptuous claim. They pretend to no such power. Why then will you officiously presume to claim it for them? And why amuse the world, and give infidels room to scoff, by the use of a solemn ceremony for the conferring these gifts, which no mortal man hath now power to bestow? The age is critical and discerning. For the honour of the Christian name, therefore, and the dignity of Christian bishops, all claims not clearly founded on scripture or reason, and all offices and rites not evidently supported by them, should silently be dropt.

The only rite, after baptism, which I find either instituted or practised by Christ and his apostles, "to make a public recognition of baptismal engagements in the face of a Christian congregation," is the celebrating the Lord's supper. By this, Christians are openly to profess themselves the subjects and followers of Jesus Christ, to recognise the baptismal covenant, to *shew forth that death* by which he purchased them to himself, and, in the most public and solemn manner, to lay themselves under fresh and most sacred obligations to live obedient to his laws. Here then all the ends which can rationally be proposed by the use of confirmation, which is merely a human invention, are better and more effectually answered by coming to the Lord's supper, which is an undoubted institution and command of Jesus Christ. With the emblems of their Saviour's body and blood in their hands, the recognition they here make of their engagements to a holy life is much more solemn, the motives to obedience more powerful and constraining, and they are certified of God's favour and gracious goodness to them by a token incomparably more important than the laying on of the bishop's hands. If you ask, "What is this to those

" who

“ who dare not offer themselves to the sacrament?”* I answer, such have equal reason not to offer themselves to confirmation : the same faith and sincerity, which are requisite to render a person a proper subject of the one, make him also a worthy communicant in the other.

That this ceremony of confirmation is no part of genuine and primitive Christianity is, I suppose, well known to all our learned bishops and divines. Tertullian is the most ancient author in which any mention of it is made. But, by his time, it is well known a great variety of superstitious and ridiculous and foolish rites were brought into the Church. And you are also, I presume, not ignorant that confirmation was then always performed (not as it is with us, but) immediately after baptism, as it is now also throughout the Greek Church, and all the Churches of the East. A due regard to this will lead you to the true meaning of that expression in your office, which you are so embarrassed in clearing up, where the bishop declares to God, *That he hath vouchsafed to regenerate these his servants by water and the Holy Ghost, and to give them the forgiveness of all their sins* :—an expression taken, probably, from some ancient liturgy, and which was suitable and well adapted to the practice of those times, but is utterly incongruous and unsuitable to ours.

For, then, as Dr. Cave observes,† “ Though infants were undoubtedly taken into the Church by baptism, yet the main body of the baptised were adult persons ; who, flocking over daily in great numbers to the faith of Christ, were received in at his door. Usually they were for some considerable time catechised, and trained up in the principles of the Christian faith, till, having given testimony of their proficiency in knowledge, and of a sober and regular conversation, they became candidates for baptism :” or, as a greater author says,‡ The catechumens enjoyed not the privileges of the faithful till they

* II. Defence, page 39.

† Prim. Chris. Part I. pages 194, 208

‡ Inquiry into the Constitution, &c. Part I. page 120.

“ had

“ had, in a sense, merited them ; which was when,
 “ through a considerable time of trial, they had
 “ evidenced the sincerity of their hearts by the
 “ sanctity and purity of their lives : And then, as
 “ Origen says, *We initiate them in our mysteries,*
 “ *when they have made a proficiency in holiness, and*
 “ *according to the utmost of their power have refor-*
 “ *med their conversation.* When they had changed
 “ their manners, and rectified their irregular car-
 “ riage, they then were washed with the water of
 “ baptism, and not before. For, as Tertullian ob-
 “ serves, we are not baptised *that we may cease to*
 “ *sin, but because we have already ceased.*” Now,
 when this was the case, and immediately after
 baptism confirmation was administered, there was
 some decency and propriety in the bishop’s or pres-
 byter’s (for presbyters also then confirmed) ad-
 dressing Almighty God as having *vouchsafed to re-*
generate these his servants with water and the
Holy Ghost, and to grant them the forgiveness of
all their sins. But how different, alas ! vastly dif-
 ferent, is the case at present with the multitudes
 who flock to our modern confirmations ! With
 what levity and rudeness do they rush to re-
 ceive this episcopal grace ! In how slight and care-
 less a manner is the ceremony performed ! What
 riot and disorder frequently conclude the day !
 This is too obvious to the world, and it would seem,
 perhaps, invidious, were I to dwell longer upon
 it.

Your laboured apology for the bishop’s making
 that very weighty and solemn declaration over a
 promiscuous assembly, which is supposed to include
 many vicious and corrupt persons, is effectually
 overthrown by your own just concession, “ that,
 “ if he were, indeed, to declare to each individual
 “ person, by himself, that God had regenerated
 “ him in particular with the Holy Ghost, and for-
 “ given him all his sins, it would be a different
 “ case. Such a person might be tempted thereby
 “ to entertain better thoughts of the state of his
 “ soul than he had reason for, and to delude him-

“ self

“ self with deceitful hopes.*” Behold this, in effect, is indisputably done ! For, each individual person, after having heard this solemn declaration pronounced over himself in common with all the rest, is presented separately by his parish-priest; and, kneeling before the bishop, feels his consecrating hand resting upon his head, and hears himself distinctly and personally certified (assured from the bishop’s mouth) that this is a token of God’s favour and gracious goodness to him in particular. What now, I ask, is the obvious, the natural, construction which the person puts upon all this ! Why, surely, unless he thinks the whole solemnity to be a farce, and that the bishop and priest (his spiritual guides, whose *lips are to preserve knowledge*, and who are to be the mouth of God to him) have conspired to put a dangerous cheat upon his soul, he must strongly conclude his soul to be in a safe and happy state, and that he is a partaker of that forgiveness which God has graciously promised in the gospel of Jesus Christ ? Whether the continuance of this ceremony, in its present form of administration, be either for the honour of the administrator, or for the benefit of the Church ;— whether it hath not an apparent tendency to cherish a delusive hope, and to speak peace to such persons as are not, by the Christian covenant, entitled to peace ;—I with all humility leave to the consideration of those whom, I thank God, it more immediately concerns than myself ; who are to be faithful in God’s house, and to watch for men’s souls as those who must give an account to the great Shepherd, who will shortly come ; before whom it will be a tremendous thing to have the immortal souls of thousands required at their hands.

* II. Defence, page 43.

S E C T. VI.

The Terms of MINISTERIAL Conformity hard and terrible.—LAY-DISSENT justified.—The RISE of the Separation.

NEXT, after confirmation, I considered two other offices of your liturgy, viz. Absolution of the sick, and the Burial of the dead ; and shewed them, I apprehend, to be liable to great exceptions, and to have no friendly aspect upon the morals and souls of men. I am strengthened in that opinion by observing, that, amidst the variety of trifling things to which you have descended in the prosecution of this debate, you have quite overlooked these two important points, and have not so much as undertaken their defence. It does some honour to your understanding not to attempt to defend what you know to be indefensible, but to let the forms lie under the imputations charged upon them, till God shall put it into the hearts of those who have it in their power to wipe these unhappy blemishes from the face of the Church.

But, as to these and some other of your additional splendours, (doing reverence towards the East, and bowing to the name of Jesus, which, also, you do not so much as pretend either to justify or explain,) you observe, “ That these are things with which, as a layman, I have no concern. As to the form of absolution, what has he, for God’s sake, to do with it? If he does not design to take orders in the Church, and to subscribe to the use of the liturgy, it is no concern of his whether that form be defensible or not.”* But have not I, dear Sir, as much to do with your ministerial conformity as you have with my lay-dissent? Are you not as much obliged to vindicate before the world your subscription to and use of these offices in your Church, as I am to justify my separation from it? Yes, and I now publicly call upon you, and charge it upon your most serious deliberate reflections, as you will soon answer it at a supreme and impartial tribunal, to remember and consider,

* II. Defence, page 133.

That

That you have solemnly, and in the presence of God, who searcheth the heart, and abhors all prevarication, hypocrisy, and deceit, especially in religious concerns; in the presence of this God, I say, and in the face of his Church, you have declared your “UNFEIGNED assent and consent to all “and every thing contained in and prescribed by “the book of Common-Prayer, &c. If then there be any one thing contained in that book, any one office or form, which is irrational, unfit, or repugnant to the gospel scheme, and which no well-instructed Christian can heartily assent to or unfeignedly approve, I appeal to your own conscience, I appeal to the whole world, where is the honour, where the Christian simplicity and godly sincerity, of this solemn declaration! What! shall a man, a minister, in God’s presence, and appealing to him as the Searcher of hearts, declare his unfeigned assent to things he does not approve; and promise his unfeigned consent to use forms in God’s worship which he heartily dislikes! This is a most grievous yoke upon the necks of Christian ministers, beheld by unbelievers with the greatest ridicule and contempt, and which every friend to the Christian name would heartily wish to see removed. And,

This, as before observed, most fully justified that separation from your Church, to which our fathers were compelled, (and which we at present continue,) when, in a most unrighteous and schismatical manner, she cast out above two thousand of her ministers, for not subscribing and declaring this unfeigned assent and consent. These ministers were by this deprived of what they had not forfeited;—deprived of acting as ministers by those who had no right nor authority to deprive them of it. The pastoral relation, therefore, undoubtedly remained between them and their respective flocks, and they acted a lawful, a worthy, part in continuing their ministerial services though thus cruelly cast out.

“No, (you reply,) they ought to have con-
 “formed as laymen, as some of them did; much

“ less will this justify the laity of those times; “ less still the ministers and laity of the present in “ their separation.”* To their immortal praise be it recorded, they better understood their rights as men, and their duty as subjects of Christ, the only King and Head of the Church; and, therefore, with great suffering and worldly loss, entered boldly their protest against this presumptuous invasion of his throne, this schismatical intrusion of new terms of the Christian ministry and communion into his Church. The conditions of exercising the Christian ministry, which the Act of Uniformity imposed upon our fathers, were such as no power upon earth had a right to impose upon them: they were such as, if complied with, opened a wide way by which innumerable corruptions, superstitions, and persecutions, might enter and lay waste the Church. Their subscription was required to new articles of faith which Christ had never made, and their unfeigned assent and consent to new rites and forms of worship which neither Christ nor his apostles had ever appointed or enjoined: yea, it obliged them schismatically to confine Christian communion to those only who would submit to these inventions of men in the worship of God, and to deny baptism and the Lord’s supper to those who, by the constitution and the laws of Christ’s kingdom, were duly qualified for these ordinances, and who had therefore an absolute right to receive them.

Among others, there are two ever-memorable circumstances from which the flagrant oppression and tyranny of those proceedings most strongly appear: 1. That the time fixed for the minister’s subscribing and assenting to the alterations in the Common Prayer was so short, that not one in a hundred of those who lived remote from London saw, or could be supposed to see them, before their assent and consent were, under so severe a penalty, to be solemnly given. It is a known and certain

* II. Defence, page 131.

truth,

truth, says one,* that the Liturgy with its alterations, to which they were unfeignedly to assent, came not out of the press till Bartholomew eve; and the following day was the ultimate time fixed by the act for the ministers' subscription; so that all those, throughout the kingdom, who conformed, except a few in London, subscribed to they knew not what. "The matter was driven on (says Bishop Burnet) with so much precipitation, that it seemed expected the clergy should subscribe implicitly to a book they had never seen. This was done by too many, as the bishops themselves informed me."†—Could any thing be more unrighteous or tyrannical than this? Yes: for,

2. The unhappy ministers were obliged likewise to declare solemnly, and even to subscribe a most notorious and dangerous untruth, viz. "That it is not lawful, upon any pretence whatsoever, to take arms against the king, or any commissioned by him:"—a position absolutely subversive of the British constitution, and which the nation was soon after (in God's righteous and wise providence) brought openly to acknowledge to be traiterous, detestable, scandalous, and false;—a position, which, if admitted, the glorious revolution, and our present happy government, had never taken place, but tyranny, and popery, with all their dire curses, had been bound eternally upon our necks. But, be astonished, O heavens! this false, this base, this scandalous, declaration the ministers were, by the Act of Uniformity, obliged solemnly to make upon pain of losing their livings. OUR FATHERS nobly abhorred such an ignominious surrender of the natural rights of men: they scorned to betray the liberties of their country, and to be tools of arbitrary power.‡ For this heroic

* Tong of Schism, page 150.

† History of his Time, Vol. I. page 212. 8vo.

‡ Whilst every enlarged and liberal mind rejoices in the consideration, that the cause of civil and religious liberty is, in this age, better understood, and more generally patronised

heroic refusal they were cruelly cast from their Churches, and delivered up, with their starving families, to extreme sufferings and distrels.*

This Sir, was the shameful, the tyrannical, yoke which the Act of Uniformity would have put upon the necks of our illustrious predecessors, and to which, as Christians and as Protestants, they bravely scorned to submit. Noble was the stand which they made in defence of Christian liberty and truth. Glorious will their names ever shine in the British annals, whilst virtue and integrity

trionised than in the times of which I am writing, the Protestant Dissenters are peculiarly entitled to triumph in the recollection that these two most invaluable blessings have been preserved, and handed down to their fellow-subjects in consequence of the firm adherence of their forefathers to the cause of liberty and truth, both civil and religious. There is an observation in Mr. Hume's Hist. of England which is the more important in proof of this assertion, as it is made by an historian who cannot be suspected of entertaining any prejudices in their favour. He observes, (when speaking of the arbitrary conduct of Elizabeth,) "So absolute was the authority of the crown, that the precious spark of liberty had been kindled and was preserved by the Puritans alone, and it was to this sect, whose principles appear so frivolous and habits so ridiculous, that the English owe the whole freedom of their constitution." Hume's Hist. of England, Vol. V. page 189, 8vo. Edit. 1763.

* "By the Act of Uniformity, (says Mr. Locke) all the clergy of England are obliged to subscribe and declare, "That it is not lawful upon any pretence whatever to take arms against the king." This they readily complied with.† For, you must know that sort of men are taught rather to obey than to understand. And yet, that Bartholomew-day was fatal to our Church and religion, by throwing out a very great number of worthy, learned, pious, orthodox, divines, who could not come up to this oath, and other things in that act. And so great was the zeal in carrying on this Church-affair, and so blind in the obedience required, that, if you compute the time of passing this act, with that allowed for the clergy to subscribe the Book of Common Prayer thereby established, you will find it could not be printed and distributed so as that one man in forty could have seen and read the book they did so perfectly assent and consent to." Maiz. col. page 61.

† Our two thousand worthy predecessors excepted.

are

are sacred among us. Peace and everlasting honour be upon the memory of these Christian heroes! Future generations will rise up and call them blessed!

To their ministers, thus unrighteously and cruelly ejected, it was the duty and the honour of the Christian laity to adhere. It was partly for their liberty, and that the gospel might be continued in its primitive simplicity and purity among them, that their ministers thus suffered. It would therefore have been inglorious, ungrateful, and in the highest degree unjust, had the laity forsaken their ejected pastors, and not borne their witness with them against the imposing spirit which then lifted itself up, and was fastening a disgraceful yoke upon the disciples of Christ. Through the favour of heaven, a noble spirit of Christian fortitude was awakened also in lay-breasts, and, its mercy be praised, still lives, beats high, and, we hope, finally advances to the everlasting overthrow of bigotry, church-tyranny, and persecution, from the earth. They saw and detested the dangerous and fatal schism, and the usurpation upon the rights of conscience, which a party of lordly men were setting up in the Church of Christ: they firmly adhered to their injured ministers, and to the principles of Christian liberty. And God hath eminently blessed their Churches for the promoting sincere piety, sobriety, and virtue, in all succeeding times.

This was the rite of that separation from the establishment which I am defending in these letters:—a separation, which, as it was founded upon Christian and just principles, so it has marvellously subsisted under great worldly discouragements, strengthened and upheld, we trust, by the mighty power of God. And, by the same mighty power, we hope, will still be upheld, till his mercy shall dispose the hearts of our brethren, who have cast us out, to receive us again.

As a layman, Sir, I consider the gospel and Christian liberty as a sacred deposit, committed to me by God, for which I am to be accountable

at

at his tribunal hereafter. As to these, he hath expressly charged me, and every Lay-Christian, *to watch,——to stand fast,——to keep what is committed to me,——to fight the good fight of faith, &c.*—If I see then the simplicity and liberty of the gospel corrupted and infringed by the inventions, traditions, and commandments, of men; the unity of the Church broken by new terms of communion, and new articles of faith imposed upon the disciples:—if I see things ridiculous,* superstitious,† erroneous,‡ brought into the Church, and made a part of Christian worship,—things dangerous to mens souls, and which give them wrong notions of the terms of salvation and acceptance with God, and which manifestly tend to cherish a false and delusive peace,||—in this case, though a layman, I am bound to enter my protest, and to declare openly my dissent, as I would not be condemned as a betrayer of my sacred trust, and would stand before my Judge with confidence at last.

S E C T. VII.

Several gross MISREPRESENTATIONS of the Dissenters corrected.

I Proceed next to what you seem to glory in as the peculiar excellence of your letters, but which will soon appear, to your very self, their peculiar foible and disgrace, viz. *Your retorting upon Dissenters their own pleas and objections*; particularly your charge, That they not only have, but impose, ceremonies in divine worship, and that there are various impositions amongst ourselves.

* Reading the spurious, romantic, apocryphal, fables.

† Bowing at the name of Jesus, and worshipping towards the East, &c.

‡ Several of the articles, especially the XXth, and the damnatory clauses of the Athanasian creed.

|| The Absolution of the Sick, the Burial-Office, and Confirmation.

You

You here force me to call you forth, Sir, to undergo the mortification of seeing yourself proved before the world a false accuser of your brethren. *Sitting* at the Lord's supper you have, at several distinct times, and with great variety of language, most confidently asserted "to be really imposed by us,—to be constantly, invariably, and universally, practised among us:—that it is never allowed to be departed from:—that our ministers insist upon and refuse to abate it:"* —with much more to the same purpose. This now is a charge not only absolutely false, but (which is a very aggravating circumstance, and must shock greatly your character and credit before the world) you had seen it to have been false. For, you had actually read in Dr. Calamy's Brief Account, &c. a most express declaration that no such thing was at all imposed among us, but that our communicants were *at liberty* to use their own posture. I again put you in mind of this, because you have not yet been so ingenuous as to own the falsehood of this charge, and publicly to retract it. I can assure the public, there are no less than seven or eight dissenting Churches, in my own neighbourhood, in which the posture either of standing or kneeling at the Lord's supper has constantly been practised for many years past, (though in some of them the persons are now deceased,) and this without the least offence to any of the congregations, or dislike of the ministers. Judge, hence, reader, what regard is to be paid to the representations of this zealous censor, and how justly he describes himself "encountering with ghosts, and groping in the dark!"

With equal rashness you affirmed, and still stoutly maintain, "That *kneeling* in family-prayer is always practised by Dissenters: that it is imposed and commanded by the master of the family, upon his children and servants, by his signifying his mind to them, and letting them know, once for all, he would have them *kneel*."†

* Letter II. pages 56, 57, 58. Letter III. pages 8, 9.

† II. Defence, pages 70, 71.

Upon a particular enquiry, I assure the public that I cannot find the least trace of any such impositions or signification of the master's mind in any family of Dissenters; but that, in their family-devotions, *standing* is a posture very frequently used, and not avoided, in point of conscience, I believe, by ten Dissenters in the kingdom. The matter is too trifling to merit many words. But, to let you see how utterly unfit you are for the office you assume, I will take you from the darkness, where you miserably grope, and lead you to a light which will a little disconcert your countenance, by acquainting you, that, at three of the principal dissenting academies in England, viz. Northampton, Taunton, and Bridgewater, it hath been the general, if not the constant, unvaried usage both of tutors and students, to *stand* at family prayer. These are the nurseries where most of the dissenting gentlemen and ministers in England have been formed; whose custom, therefore, must naturally have a wide and strong influence upon multitudes of dissenting families throughout the land. See now with what truth, with what honour and discretion, you bolt your random censures at the religious conduct of your neighbours, and feel the just pain with which they rebound and wound your own head!

But what heightens our perverseness and inconsistency is this,—that, at the same time that we thus always worship *kneeling* in our families, and the master commands and imposes it upon all its members, “ Yet, in our prayers at Church, there, it “ seems, we *always stand*; and it is little less than “ imposed upon our people; for, so great and general is the discountenance that *kneeling* lies “ under, that it requires some courage and resolution for any one to venture upon it; and if any “ one does, (you say it again,) he will be censured “ for it.”* A charge not more bold than it is groundless and false. “ One congregation, (you “ have said,) you can name, where great offence

* II. Defence, page 72.

“ was given by a person kneeling at her prayers.” But you have publicly been told, by an authority, of great weight, which I presume you durst not contradict, *that the whole account is a MISREPRESENTATION, of which the most authentic evidence is ready to be produced.** Did I not justly say that your informers had served you ill? A man conscious of his own blindness, should be cautious into what hands he delivers himself up.

Besides, could you have made good the charge, not against one only, but even a hundred of our Churches, will this justify the universality and positiveness of your assertion, that, “ if any one *“ kneels* among us he will be censured for it?” This publicly accuses not one only, nor a hundred, but all the dissenting Churches, of this ridiculous weakness, which you cannot prove upon any single one of them all. The reproach, therefore, comes back with great force upon yourself. I have made no extensive enquiries on this head, but can take upon me to assure you, there are no less than six or seven of our congregations near me (I believe there are many more) where *kneeling* at public prayer hath been constantly practised by one or more members without the least discountenance. And, of the many ministers, I have consulted, I find not one who imagines the practice would give offence to any single congregation among us.

Equally just and well supported is that other reproach, “ That it is generally held among us that *“ the sacrament is for none but perfect and con-
“ summate Christians.”* After multiplying on this subject many words to little purpose, you are at last forced to retract this injurious imputation as to the Presbyterians, † and acknowledge it to be false. You might have done the same by the Independents, whom you still leave under its weight. For, though they are generally more minute, I fear, in enquiring after proofs of the sincerity of a man’s Christianity than the scriptures authorise them,

* Chandler’s Case of Subscription, page 14.

† Defence, page 36.

yet there is scarcely one, I believe, to be found among the most rigid of them who will not declare, that every sincere Christian hath a right to the Lord's table. For, do they not all acknowledge that every such person is become, by the gospel-covenant, *a child of God and a brother of Jesus Christ*? Will the most rigid Independent say, then, that such have not a right to eat of the sacramental supper? No, the truth of grace, they will tell you, be it in ever so weak a state, entitles to the sacrament. You wrong them, therefore, much by saying, that they hold it to belong to none but perfect and consummate Christians.

Thus groundless and ill-supported, Sir, are the defamations of your dissenting brethren, which your prejudices against them have, I fear, disposed you to receive with too much pleasure, and to have published to the world before you were sufficiently informed whether they were true or false. But suffer, I beseech you, the council of a friend. Put away far from you that little, ungenerous, unmanly, bigoted, spirit, by which "You advise the faithful to shun the conversation and company of our ministers, as being notorious sinners, and not to have any intimate unnecessary acquaintance with them, or familiarity in common life."* Indulge the more Christian and catholic disposition Dr. Nichols recommends, who informs the world with pleasure "of the charitable correspondence and strict degree of friendship which subsists betwixt the established clergy and some of the dissenting ministers."† It is because they know one another no better, that they do not love each other more. The natural consequence of shyness is estrangement; this too often produces aversion. The mind then becomes prepared not only for receiving with pleasure any scandalous and mean suspicions, but also for industriously propagating the grossest misrepresentations or the falsest accusations.

* Letter II. page 8. Letter I. page 13.

† Nich. Def. page 145.

Had you freely conversed with the dissenting ministers around you, as the learned Doctor Nichols advises, you had saved yourself a good deal of public mortification, which your injurious accounts both of their principles and practice have now unhappily drawn upon you. Cultivate at length, Sir, a familiar acquaintance with them. Their acquaintance will do you honour,—will edify and enlarge your mind,—will give you juster notions of men and of things than a mere college-education is capable of doing, and prepare you for that happy world where bigotry and party-zeal will no more alienate pious spirits, but *where all the children of God are gathered together in one*. From them you would have learned, that the ceremonies of the sweeping cloak, of kneeling at ordination, of the people's holding up their hands at that solemnity, of striking a covenant with their pastors, of giving the name at baptism, are most of them never used at all in the greater part of the dissenting Churches, and the others not in the least imposed; full liberty is given to use or to use them not: no stress is laid upon them; much less are they made indispensable terms of Christian communion, as sponsors, the cross, and kneeling are with you. They would, moreover, have told you, what you seem not to know, that it is not the mere using ceremonies against which Dissenters object, so much as the imposing them; the laying a stress upon them; the considering them as decorations and improvements of Christian worship; not only useful, but necessary, institutions, (as you had the irreverence to your divine Lawgiver to pronounce concerning sponsors,) and the making compliance with them terms of reception into the Family and Church of Christ. And, finally, they would have told you, that mens *uncovering the head* in prayer is by no means a mere ceremony, but a circumstance, or act, of worship, which seems dictated by the light of nature, and is commanded by an apostle, 1 Cor. xi. 3, 4, 7; and that, therefore, your placing this in the rank of ceremonies practised by Dissenters was (to return your

own compliment) most certainly a very heedless and wrongheaded thing.

“The neglect of private fasting” is another charge you advance against us, “and insist confidently that you were right in saying it was “very little, if at all, practised among us.”* Dissenters, Sir, I presume, have read that instruction of their Master, Matt. vi. 17. *Thou, when thou fastest, anoint thy head, and wash thy face, that thou appear not unto men to fast, but to thy Father which is in heaven.* Though they affect not to flourish with their Vigils and Lents, (which, with sorrow, they see turned into little else than a religious farce by too many around them,) nor, like the Pharisee, are ostentatious in telling God and the world how often they fast, yet this duty, I am persuaded, is practised with much seriousness among them. Besides the excellent discourse of Bennet, to which you were referred, you call for more tracts. See another on the same subject in the Morning-Exercise, by Barker; and from the Lives of the two Henrys, Allen, Baxter, Tross, &c. particularly of the late most ingenious and pious Abernethy, you may learn what are their religious sentiments and practice as to this matter. In many of their Churches there are stated periodical fasts, besides the personal domestic ones, which, upon extraordinary occasions, are not unusual among them.

But was it possible you should so alertly attack us on this head when you know it to be in our power with such advantage to retort! If “you have met with no sermons or tracts of Dissenters recommending private fasts,”—pray, have you met with any which discourage and forbid them? But, have you never met with your own LXXIII^d Canon? which says, “No minister shall, without licence of the bishop under his hand and seal, keep any solemn fasts, either publicly or in any private houses, other than such as are appointed by law, nor be present at any of them, under

“pain of suspension for the first fault, of excommunication for the second, and of deposition from the ministry for the third.” This, Sir, is the exalted foot upon which the duty of private fasting stands in your Church! Could any thing then be more wise, more pertinent, or more just, than the censures you deal us here!

As to the posture of *standing* at public prayer, for which also you had the sagacity sharply to reprehend us, besides the great variety of Scripture examples which I produced in its justification, you have had since, from a learned hand,* indisputable proofs from Justin Martyr, Irenæus, Clemens of Alexandria, Tertullian, Origen, Cyprian, the apostolical constitutions, Jerome, and Austin, that it was the posture in which the Christian Churches universally offered up their public and most solemn addresses to God through all the primitive times. So unlucky is your hand, that the bolts you fling at us, as debasers of the public worship, &c. alight directly upon the heads of some of the most sacred and venerable persons which either Scripture or antiquity holds out to your view!

“But the instances of Abraham, Moses, Samuel, &c. *standing* in prayer serve (you say) to little purpose, unless it were also shewn that they were instances of such simple mere *standing* as is practised in our congregations.”† Yes, they are full to our purpose, because it appears not from the sacred story but they were instances of exactly such simple mere *standing as is used among us*. As to the other gestures of devotion which your imagination would supply, the Scriptures are wholly silent; and you will excuse us, Sir, from accepting your fertile imagination as a proper supplement to the word of God.

“The primitive Christians (you observe) cannot be imagined to do no more than *barely keep upon their feet*. No, they prayed with hands

* Chandler's Case of Subscription, pages 11, 12.

† II. Defence, page 76.

“spread, and with eyes lift up toward heaven.”^{*} Hence, then, we infer, First, That they did not read their prayers from a book: that there were no liturgies in those days. But the pastor, as Justin Martyr and Origen say, offered up prayers and praises to God, *according to his power, or as he was able*. But, secondly, by the account which both Cyprian and Tertullian give of their gesture and manner, the public prayers in dissenting Churches much more nearly resemble it than those offered in yours. “Stamus ad orationem, cum modestia et humilitate adorantes, &c.”[†]—“We stand at prayer, adoring with modesty and humility, that we may the more effectually commend our prayers to God; not even lifting up our hands high, but moderately and decently, no nor boldly elevating our faces. For, the publican, whose countenance, as well as prayers, was humble and dejected, went away justified rather than the saucy Pharisee.”

When you have sedately considered the contents of this section, you will see cause, Sir, once more to resume your censorial rod, and to lay it smartly on yourself; condemning heartily your own temerity in presuming to write so freely about persons and things you knew so little of, and to pronounce preremptorily upon matters which you had so slightly examined.

Though this view of your misrepresentations might have been greatly enlarged, I shall conclude with mentioning only one fresh and flagrant instance, ‡ which shews your honour and justice in a very unfavourable light, and too plainly demonstrates that your zeal for the Church hath eaten them up. It is the “case of a dissenting minister in Cambridge, whom you knew; and who, you affirm, declared from his pulpit, that *the Common Prayer-Book had damned more souls than the Bible had saved*; for which he was indicted, and had his public trial as a depraver of

* II. Defence, page 72.

† Tert. de Orat. Cap. 13.

‡ II. Defence, page 116.

“it.”

“it.” Here you stop short, and leave that injured gentleman; yea, you transmit him to posterity, under the scandal of the indictment, without having the honesty and the virtue to inform the world of the issue, which you could not but also know, viz. That, after a long and full hearing on both sides, he was, by the jury, *honourably acquitted*. This, Sir, is such an instance of partiality, injustice, and wilful misrepresentation, that every candid and virtuous man must look on it with the utmost indignation; and you, Sir, I hope, will review it with the deepest humiliation and contrition. The case of that injured minister, (Mr. Joseph Husley,) has been since published, (printed at Colchester, in your neighbourhood, 1737,) which I cannot doubt of your having known or seen. Thence it fully appears, that Mr. Husley spake *honourably*, not *reproachfully*, of the Common Prayer in the sermon referred to; and that he deserved highly that acquittal and triumph over his enemies which the justice of his country gave him, but which you injuriously endeavour to blast and suppress.*

* He was shewing how utterly repugnant the Arminian principles are to several parts of the Common-Prayer; and, after several things said very respectfully of that book, concludes, “I wish there was more of that Spirit of God breathing in the souls of men now, which breathed in the souls of those who made the Common Prayer; and, indeed, considering the inconsistency of men’s principles, with their gross hypocrisies in practice, I fear that at the great day, when the books are opened, this book of Common Prayer, when it is opened, will come in a swift witness against them. And, if so, I fear that it will be found that that book they so much now rely on, may be a means of sending more of them to hell than the gospel converts in England.”

S E C T. VIII.

Dissenters not inconsistent in submitting to some ceremonies, and refusing others.

THIS is another charge which you strenuously advance against us. You say, "The ceremonies of marriage and of burial, to which we conform, are enjoined in the same manner, by the same authority, and in the same place, (the Common Prayer,) as the other ceremonies and rites against which we protest." And you state it as a difficulty which you seem to think will surprise and confound us, "Where and when the magistrate prescribed the marriage-ceremonies otherwise than he did those of baptism and the Lord's supper."* I am truly surpris'd, Sir, that so mere a cobweb should entangle you. Pray, what is your Common Prayer? is it any thing but a mere statute, or act of parliament? as really and truly such as any statute in our books of law, and nothing more. Now, as the magistrate has in this statute enjoined the manner in which the marriage-ceremony is to be performed, pretending that he hereby gives the best legal securities both to the contracting parties and their issue, we, who consider the ceremonies of this contract as being merely of a civil nature, and as such within the magistrate's province, (as much so as are the forms prescribed by law for making a good title to an estate,) submit to it as an ordinance of man, notwithstanding we are sensible of the objections which may be justly urged against some parts of the service which he has appointed for this purpose. Yet, as he has also enjoined, in the same statute, other things merely of a religious nature, (relating to baptism and the Lord's supper,) which, in our opinion, belong to another kingdom, viz. that of Jesus Christ, to whom God has delegated all authority in his Church, we think ourselves justified in withholding our submission to those

* Defence, page 80. Letter III. p. 6.

things which are not within the province of the civil magistrate. We choose to obey God rather than man; and if you, Sir, will calmly attend to this distinction which we make, you will perceive that no difficulty, or entanglement attends it.

“But, you observe, that, upon this supposition, all our objections to the burial-office, as reasons against conformity fall to the ground. For, if the whole transaction be a political thing, and the gentleman officiating is, in that, no other than an officer of the state, how is the Church, for the Lord’s sake, concerned in any thing he either says or does on that occasion?”* Certainly very much. The Church is, indeed, nothing but a branch, or limb, of the state. But, if the state exacts, of those whom it deposes to officiate in this part of its administration, unreasonable and shocking things; if it commands them to say that black is white, to pronounce solemnly a man saved whom they think verily to be lost, and to thank God *that in his great mercy he hath taken to himself an abominable sinner*, when, in their consciences, they believe that God *took him away in wrath*, and hath driven him from his presence to eternal darkness below,—is the officer, will you say, who is to pronounce and to do this, *not at all concerned therein?* nor that branch of the administration in which he officiates at all wounded thereby in its honour and reputation? Most deeply, no doubt. And all virtuous and good men, by the eternal regards they owe to righteousness and truth, ought openly to protest against such public violations of them, and to declare their dislike of such prostitution of sacred things.

“The Church,” your learned Warburton† tells us, “has, by contract or alliance, resigned up her supremacy in matters ecclesiastical, and her independency to the state.” The state, in consequence of this, hath drawn up, for her, articles of faith and forms of public worship, which

* II. Defence, page 82. † Alliance, &c. page 87.

it requires the Church to subscribe, and to use. Hard fate of unhappy Church! to come as a pupil to the state, to ask what she must believe and how she must worship; yea, to be forced solemnly to subscribe articles which she by no means believes, and to use forms of public worship which she greatly dislikes! But, is there no prevarication nor hypocrisy in all this? No, you will say; the state hath commanded it; and we are to be *subject to the higher powers*, and to *obey those who have the rule over us*. It is not for an individual to oppose the public voice, but, if any one dare say, "That either of the articles is in any part erroneous, or that the Book of Common Prayer contains any thing in it contrary to Scripture," your IVth and Vth canons thunder out upon him *ipso facto*, a most terrible excommunication, and cut him off, as a wicked wretch, from the body of Christ. Excellent constitution this! quite holy and apostolic! most heavenly and divine! bearing upon every part a lively and glorious impress of the character of Jesus Christ! What wonder if the dignity of the priestly character sinks? If religion is ridiculed, and its sacred things treated with drollery and jest? *It is impossible*, we are told, *but offences will come*, but *wo be to that man!* wo be to those Christians, whose hypocritical and corrupt conduct lays these *stones of stumbling* in the way of Infidels and Papists! and by *whom the offence cometh*.

S E C T. IX.

The egregious absurdity of rejecting PRESBYTERIAN and admitting POPISH ordinations.

WE come next to your observations on orders, or Ordination, about which you make a very solemn parade, boasting of your fancied superiority over us in this respect. The severity with which you speak of the ordination of the Dissenters, though the very same with that of all
the

the illustrious Churches of Protestants abroad, whilst, at the same time, you are so complaisant as to acknowledge the validity of the ordinations of the Church of Rome, is a conduct so extraordinary in a Protestant divine, that I never yet saw even any plausible reason for supporting it. The hands and the devoutest prayers of a company of truly virtuous, religious, and Christian, Presbyters, in Scotland or Geneva, are not so efficacious, it seems, to send a man forth a true minister in the Church of Christ, as the hands and superstitious prayers of an antichristian, idolatrous, persecuting, and wicked, bishop of Italy or of Spain. No: let a priest, ordained by one of these, come over to the Church of England, he shall be received as a valid minister, rightfully ordained; but, let another, ordained by the most learned religious Presbytery, which Germany, Hungary, or the whole world, can boast, come over also to this Church, this Protestant Church, his orders shall be pronounced not valid; he must submit to be re-ordained. The former is admitted as one rightly and duly entered a pastor in the Christian Church, because a bishop's hand was laid upon him, though with a great many ridiculous, superstitious, and foolish, rites; and, though he was really no Christian bishop, but an apostate from Christianity, an open and avowed idolater, and a persecutor of the flock of Christ; yea, though the Church also, into which, by that ceremony, he was entered, was *so far from being a true Church, that, for nine hundred years past, nothing can be more.** But the latter, though set apart to the ministry by the most fervent and holy prayers; though he has long laboured in the Church of God with great diligence and success; has suffered, perhaps, the loss of all for the sake of Christ and his truth, and is fled hither from the rage of idolatrous and cruel bishops; yet, (strange to relate!) not having had the hand of such an idolatrous and cruel bishop in the ceremony of his ordination, he is considered

* The words of the homily which every clergyman subscribes his solemn approbation of.

only

only as a mere layman in this Protestant Church of England; he shall not, cannot, be acknowledged by us as a minister of Jesus Christ. How mysterious and quite astonishing is the partiality of this conduct!

But let us hear your censure on this head. "Our ministers are not duly ordained to their office. Their ministrations are most certainly irregular; and unnecessary and wanton, if not a factious, departure from the primitive order, and, therefore, those who attend them cannot depend that such ordinances will be blessed to them, nor can they be pleasing to God."* And, concerning the established Presbyterian Church of Scotland, you affirm, "That, having renounced episcopacy, and their ordinations being irregular, their communion can neither be safe nor lawful."† A most schismatical and rash judgment, which equally condemns all the illustrious reformed Churches of France, Holland, Switzerland, Germany, Poland, Hungary, Denmark, &c. They all likewise have renounced episcopacy: their ordinations, therefore, must be irregular, and their communion neither safe nor lawful.

But, to give you, Sir, more just and favourable impressions of ordination by Presbyters, and to abate somewhat of your high esteem of that episcopal ordination on which you so much pique yourself, I recommend to your consideration the following things:

1. That Timothy was ordained by the *laying on of the hands of the presbytery*, 1 Tim iv. 14.—That Paul and Barnabas were ordained by certain prophets and teachers in the Church of Antioch, and not by any bishop (of whom there is not a word in all that solemnity) presiding in that city. Acts xiii. 1, 2, 3.—And that is a well-known, acknowledged, incontestible, fact, that Presbyters, in the celebrated Church of Alexandria, ordained even their own bishops for more than two hundred years in the earliest ages of Christianity.

* Letter I. pages 73, 74. † II. Defence, page 145.

2. Bishops and Presbyters are in scripture the *very same*, and are not a distinct order, or office, in the Christian Church. The Church at Philippi had but two orders of church-officers among them, viz. bishops and deacons, Philip. i. 1. And that the name, office, and work, of a bishop and of a presbyter are the same, appears from Tit. i. 5. 7. *For this cause left I thee in Crete, that thou shouldst ordain Presbyters in every city; for a bishop must be blameless.*—Paul called the Presbyters of the Church of Ephesus together, and charged them, Acts xx. 27, 28, *To take heed to the flock over which the Holy Ghost had made them bishops,* ἐπισκοπος. So, 1 Pet. v. 1, 2. *The Presbyters among you I exhort, who also am a Presbyter, feed the flock of God among you, performing the office of bishops,* ἐπισκοπῶντες.

The superiority of bishops to presbyters is, not only by the first reformers and founders of the Church of England, but by many of its most learned and eminent doctors since, not pretended to be of divine, but admitted to be only of human, institution; not grounded upon Scripture, but only upon the custom or ordinances of this realm. “The truth is, that, in the New Testament, there is no mention, of any degree or distinction of orders, but only of deacons or ministers, and of priests or bishops,” says a declaration of the function, &c. which was signed by more than thirty-seven civilians and divines, among whom were thirteen bishops.* The book, intitled *The Institution of a Christian Man*, subscribed by the clergy in convocation, and confirmed by parliament, owns bishops, and presbyters, by Scripture, to be the same;† and says, though St. Paul consecrated and ordered bishops by imposition of hands, yet there is no certain rule prescribed in Scripture for the nomination, election, or presentation, of them; this is left to the positive laws of every

* Burnet's Hist. of the Reformation, Vol. I. Ap. p. 321.

† To the same purpose speaks *The Erudition of a Christian Man*.

country

country. And that the main ground of settling episcopal government in this nation was not any pretence of divine right, but the convenience of that form of Church-government to the state and condition of the Church at the time of the reformation, your learned Stillingfleet * affirms, and proves it to be the sentiment of Archbishop Cranmer and other chief reformers, both in Edward VI. and Queen Elizabeth's reigns; of Archbishop Whitegift, Bishop Bridges, Loe, Hooker, Sutcliffe, Hales, Chillingworth, &c.† I must also add,

3. That it deserves your serious consideration, whether, by the constitution and frame of the Church of England, sacerdotal ordination be really at all necessary to the making a valid minister, and to the giving success and efficacy to his ministrations; or, whether there be really any such ordination in the Church of England at all. It seems clearly the sentiment of our first reformers that sacerdotal ordination was not necessary, and that they established the Church of England agreeably to this plan. For, in a select assembly of divines, convened by the authority of King Edward VI. for the settling important points relating to religion, it was determined, as may be presumed from a recorded opinion of Archbishop

* Irenic. Ch. VIII. page 385.

† See a letter of Dr. Raynolds, of Oxford, on this head, where he declares the sameness of bishops and priests, or that they have equal authority and power, by God's word, to have been the judgement of St. Paul, Chrysostom, Jerome, Ambrose, Austin, Theodorus, Primasius, Theophylact, Oecumenius, Aenselm, Gregory, Gratian, the Waldenses, Wickliffites, Hussites, &c. Neal. Hist. Purit. Vol. I. page 497.

Archbishop Bancroft, and the rest of the bishops with him, owned the ordination of Presbyters to be valid, and therefore refused to re-ordain the Scottish Presbyters who were then to be made bishops, declaring, "That to doubt " it was to doubt whether there were any lawful vocation " in most of the reformed Churches." Archbishop Spotswood's Hist. page 514.—The bishops of Scotland, when episcopacy was settled there, never required the Presbyterian ministers to take episcopal ordination. Bp. Burnet's Vindicat. pages 84, 85.

Cranmer

Cranmer their president,* “ That, though in
 “ the admission of bishops, parsons, vicars, and
 “ other priests, to their office, there be divers
 “ comely ceremonies and solemnities used, (he
 “ speaks chiefly of ordination,) yet these be not of
 “ necessity, but only for good order and seemly
 “ fashion. For, if such offices and ministrations
 “ were committed without such solemnity, they
 “ were nevertheless truly committed. And there
 “ is no more promise of God that grace is given
 “ in the committing of the ecclesiastical office than
 “ it is in the committing the civil.—A bishop may
 “ make a priest by the Scriptures, and so may
 “ princes and governors also, and that by the au-
 “ thority of God committed to them; and the
 “ people also by their election. For, as we read
 “ that bishops have done it, so Christian emperors
 “ and princes usually have done it; and the peo-
 “ ple, before Christian princes were, commonly
 “ did elect their bishops and priests. In the New
 “ Testament, he, that is appointed to be a bishop
 “ or priest, needeth no consecration by the Scrip-
 “ ture; for, election, or appointing thereto, is
 “ sufficient.”†

Agreeably hereto, the bishops in this Church,
 in the reigns of Henry VIII. and Edward VI. took
 out commissions from the crown, like other state-
 officers, for the exercising their spiritual jurisdic-
 tion; in which they acknowledge, “ That all
 “ sorts of jurisdiction, as well ecclesiastical as
 “ civil, flow originally from the regal power as
 “ from a supreme head, the fountain and spring
 “ of all magistracy within this kingdom; and that
 “ they ought with grateful minds to acknowledge
 “ this favour, derived from the king’s liberality
 “ and indulgence; and, accordingly, they ought

* Vide Extract from Abp Cranmer’s MS. Stilling. Iren.
 Chap. VIII. page 391.

† To the same purpose speaks the Erudition of a Chris-
 tian Man, which was drawn up by a committee of bishops
 and divines, and read and approved by the lords spiritual
 and temporal and the lower house of parliament, anno
 1544. Vide Neal’s Hist. Purit. Vol. I. pages 33, 36.

“ to render it up whenever the king thought fit to require it of them. And, among the particulars of ecclesiastical power, given them by this commission, is that of ordaining presbyters; and all this to last no longer than the king’s pleasure. And these things are said to be *super* and *ultra* over and above what belongs to them by Scripture.”*

From the commissions, which the bishops took out, (especially Bonner’s, bishop of London,) it is evident, that all the power of ordination which the bishops had, or could have, and exercise, in this kingdom, they derived entirely from the civil magistrate, and only from him.† And that this really is the case as to the ecclesiastical orders conferred by our present bishops; that all the validity, significance, or weight, which they have in this Church, they derive purely and solely from the authority of the magistrate, incontestibly appears from hence, namely, that the magistrate has authoritatively directed and prescribed how, and to whom, ordination is to be given.‡ And, should an ordination be given by all the bishops of this Church in

* Rights Christ. Ch. Pref. page 39.

Even Archdeacon Echard acknowledges, that, in the reign of Henry VIII. the bishops took out, and acted by, commissions, in which they were but subaltern to the king’s vicegerent: but, in the reign of Edward VI. none being in that office, they were immediately under the king. But, by these commissions, they declare “ that they held their bishoprics only during the king’s pleasure, and were empowered in the king’s name, as his delegates, to perform ALL the parts of the episcopal function.” Echard’s Hist. of Eng. page 299.

† Anno 1550, an order of Council was made, that some bishops, and other learned men, should devise an order for the creation of bishops and priests. Burnet’s Hist. Reform. Vol. III. page 59.

‡ Vide the judgement of the court in the case of Howel, a Nonjuring clergyman, ordained by Dr. Hicks, (Tindal’s Hist. of Eng. Vol. IV. page 502.) His ordination was pronounced illegal, and he disowned as a clergyman. Vide a Statute 8, of Eliz. in Fuller’s Ch. Hist. Book ix. page 80.

other

other manner, and other form than that prescribed by the magistrate, such ordination would be of no legality at all, nor authority in this Church. The man so ordained would be no proper minister in the Church of England. A minister in the Church of Christ he possibly might be ; but he would I repeat it, be no minister in the Church of England ; nor would he have power and authority to officiate as a priest therein.*

The Church of England, if you duly weigh it, seems evidently constituted upon the congregational, or independent, plan. It is from the people, (in other words, from the king and parliament, in whom the people have lodged their power,) that all the officers in this Church receive their whole authority, and are directed how to act. In all their ordinations, jurisdictions, ministrations, its bishops and priests act entirely by an authority committed to them by the civil magistrate, which he received originally from the people. So that, as the people by their representatives, are supposed to have authorised, directed, and appointed them to act ; so and so only, are all the archbishops, bishops, and priests, in this Church to officiate, and discharge their several functions therein. And, if they presume to transgress the bounds which the people, by their representatives, have set them, and to officiate otherwise than in the form and manner prescribed, their ministrations are illegal, and of no authority in this Church.

This, Sir, (I appeal to all who know our constitution,) is the real and true nature of your boasted episcopal ordination as it now stands in our Church. It is an ordination performed by a civil officer, i. e. by one who officiates only by an au-

* The bishop at an ordination asks, " Are you called according to the will of our Lord Jesus Christ, and the DUE ORDER of this REALM ? "

Note,—it is not sufficient to make him a minister in this Church that he is called according to the will or institution of Jesus Christ, if he be not also called according to the DUE ORDER of this REALM.

thority derived to him from the civil magistrate, and the legality of whose ministrations, and their efficacy in this Church, depend entirely upon his observing the manners and forms which the magistrate hath enjoined. Ordinations, then, in the Church of England, if traced to their proper origin and rightly considered, are, in truth, nothing but merely civil, or popular, ordinations.

Nor let it be here replied, That these bishops, who, by the laws of England are impowered to ordain, are, at the same time, to be considered as successors of the apostles, and as having received power of ordination from these founders of the Christian Church by an uninterrupted lineal descent. For, the constitution, and law, of England knows nothing at all of this: it rests not this power, which it commits to its bishops, upon any such lineal succession, or descent; (which it knows to be a rope of sand, a ridiculous chimera, a thing which no man upon earth is able to make out.) No; but it considers the king, vested (by act of parliament, or the suffrage of the people) with a fulness of all power ecclesiastical in these realms, as empowering and authorising bishops to ordain. This power of ordination was once delegated to Cromwell, a layman, as vicegerent to the king, And, by the constitution and law of England, this layman had then as much authority to ordain as any bishop in the realm; and any priest, whom he had ordained, would have been as much a minister in the Church of England, and his ministrations as valid, as if all the bishops of the realm had laid their hands on his head.* But,

4. The only possible way of avoiding this difficulty is recurring to the wretched refuge of popish ordinations, and deriving the validity of your orders and ministrations, and your powers of ordination, from the idolatrous Church of Rome.

* Heath and Day, the bishops of Worcester and Chichester, were deprived of their bishoprics by a court of delegates, who were all laymen. Vide Echard's Hist. of Eng. page 310.

If you derive them not from the civil magistrate, you must derive them from popish bishops. A desperate refuge this ! attended with a train of monstrous absurdities ! all which you resolutely defend rather than admit the orders of foreign Protestant divines and the regularity of their ministrations.

That popery is an undoubted fundamental subversion of the whole scheme of Christianity,—that it is that apostacy from the Christian faith, described by St. Paul, 1 Tim. iv. 1, 2, 3. *The man of sin and the son of perdition, sitting in the Temple (or Church) of God, opposing, and exalting himself above, all that is called God*, foretold by the Holy Spirit, 2 Thess. ii. 3. 4.—and that the Church of Rome is represented, by the prophetic Spirit in the Revelation of St. John, as an *adulterous and bloody woman*, who hath broken the marriage-covenant that espoused her to Christ, and is fallen into a state of abominable and open lewdness, multiplying her fornications; and, instead of bringing forth and cherishing a faithful seed to the Redeemer, breathes out horrid threatenings and persecutions against them, *makes war with the saints*, destroys them from the earth, and is *drunk with their blood*;—that the Papacy, or Church of Rome, is thus described by the Holy Spirit, is readily acknowledged by all Protestant divines, those even of the Church of England not excepted. How astonishing then is it to see, that, from this idolatrous apostate Church, you derive, by ordination, your spiritual and sacerdotal powers; and boast that you can trace from her, by an uninterrupted line, your ecclesiastical descent. Strange ! that, without shame, you declare yourselves before the world the offspring of this filthy withered old harlot, as your Church expressly calls her; and that you rest the validity of your ordinations and holy offices in Christ Church upon their transmission to you from this antichristian and false Church, even at the very time that you acknowledge, *that, for a thousand years past, it has been so far from having the na-*

ture of the true Church, that nothing can be more. What absurdities are here! That, which is no true Church, nor has been any thing like it for a thousand years past, yet conveys true, regular, Church offices and powers? An anti-apostolic Church imparting genuine apostolic orders! The synagogue of Satan becoming the sacred repository, where the power of ordination to holy offices in Christ's Church, for more than ten centuries, principally rested, and was almost only to be found! The Church of Rome, which, by apostacy, hath cut itself off from the body of Christ, hath nevertheless his spirit and authority dwelling in it, and is commissioned by Christ to examine, ordain, and send, ministers into his Church for the edifying of his body and perfecting his saints! How marvellous and transcendent in every view is this!

"But, harlot as she is, (you say,) she may bring forth children, as well as a virtuous matron, and sometimes children far better than herself."* Poor consolation this! For, the children she brings forth, in this state of her divorcement, must be born of fornication, a spurious and corrupt race.

This, Sir, is that Church of Rome whom you own as your mother, and from whom you claim, by ordination, to be ecclesiastically sprung; and the sons of this vile and detestable prostitute you acknowledge as your brethren, duly born into the Church; ordained, because episcopally, in the valid and right manner; whereas, the glorious company of foreign reformed Churches, together with the Church of Scotland, and the dissenting ministers at home, you utterly disown as ecclesiastical brethren, and affirm, "That, having renounced episcopacy, and their ordination being irregular, their communion can neither be lawful nor safe." Where, alas! is the decency, the consistency, and common sense, to say nothing of the Christianity or charity, of this illiberal assertion!

The Church of Rome, by the XXIXth article

* II Defence, page 52.

of the Church of England, cannot be a part of the true visible Church of Christ; for, this it thus defines, "A congregation of faithful men, in which the pure word of God is preached, and the sacraments be duly administered according to Christ's ordinance, in all those things that of necessity are requisite to the same." But, do you not acknowledge that the pure word of God is so far from being preached in the Romish Church, that it is there corrupted by most erroneous and abominable traditions, idolatrous rites, and blasphemous fables, as your XXXIst article most righteously styles them? Do you not confess the wine to be an essential part of the Lord's supper? Is that sacrament then duly administered, according to Christ's ordinance, in the Church where the *cup* is taken from the laity?

In short, "If blasphemies against God and tyranny over men; if defacing the ideas of Deity, and corrupting the principles of moral honesty and virtue; if subverting the foundations of natural religion, and acting directly counter to the spirit and design, and overthrowing the essential articles, of the Christian faith; if the most avowed and bold affronts offered to heaven, and the most bloody and brutal outrages executed on the best of men; if all these, I say, are sufficient to exclude men from being a part of the truly catholic apostolic Church, the Romanists can certainly have no pretences to it."

The Church of Rome, therefore, having, by her abominable immoralities, blasphemies, and idolatries, excommunicated and cut herself off from the body of Christ, she cannot have his spirit and power still dwelling in her; consequently she has no authority to convey sacerdotal characters and offices in Christ's Church: the characters and offices, therefore, which she pretends to convey, are spurious, and of no validity or efficacy therein.

But what completes the absurdity, and renders it quite astonishing, is, that, these very popish clergy, to whose orders you pay such extravagant complaisance, are so unpolite as not to return the compliment

compliment to yours: so far from it, that they rudely pronounce you all, from the greatest archbishop to the meanest clerk in the land, a company of mere unconsecrated laymen; equally unqualified for performing any holy office in the Christian Church as the most illiterate and contemptible Dissenter. To return good for evil is, indeed, sometimes truly great. But, to see the venerable bench of bishops and governors of this Church, with the whole body of its clergy, not only yielding to, but contending before the world for, the validity and efficacy of the orders of popish priests, when, at the same time, these very priests are going up and down the kingdom undermining their authority, invalidating their ministrations, and representing their sacerdotal powers as a mere nullity and jest;—to see them publicly maintaining the ecclesiastical characters and office of these corrupters of Christianity, these sworn enemies to our civil government and to our king, these crafty seducers, who are gone out spreading treason, idolatry, superstition, and destructive error, through the land;—this is such a strain of courtesy as no reason can justify; yea, it is such a strain of weakness and impolicy as ought not to be beheld without indignant concern. For, this gives these popish emissaries a most dangerous advantage over you. They artfully tell their proselytes, “That you acknowledge the truth and validity of their orders, whilst they utterly deny the validity of yours. The only safe and sure way, therefore, is to adhere to their ministrations; which, yourselves being judges, are authentic and valid: whereas, there is, at least, a risque, a danger, attending yours;” and, “that the people cannot (to use your own words) depend with so much assurance as is requisite to the peace and acquiescence of their mind, that such ordinations will be blessed to them, and that they are pleasing to God.” Thus they uncourteously turn against you the weapons which you put into their hands; and, whilst you are justifying their orders, they make use of those very orders to poison and pervert

vert the people, and to craftily traduce, undermine, and destroy, your Church.

You also assert, that "the great blessing of episcopal ordination is wanting to the foreign Churches rather through necessity than choice.*" How absurd and romantic is this assertion! Is it not well known, that, in their public confessions and formularies of faith, bishops and priests are declared originally the same, and that the power of ordination belongs equally to both?† Can any thing be more manifest than that episcopal ordination, if chosen and desired by them, like other British manufactures, might, with all imaginable ease, be in a few days exported to them, and spread in a few months through all their provinces and towns? Are there not in this kingdom thousands of ecclesiastics, who, receiving it from our bishops, would most joyfully carry over this great blessing to foreign Churches? Or, should any of their divines come over to fetch it, would they not be received, think you, with the most cordial welcome, and return loaded with honours, perhaps with favours more solid and substantial than these? Has there been no management or address used, through a century past, to introduce into their Churches this episcopal grace? And, as to its "suits the constitution and frame of their civil governments," nothing, you know, can better fit those of the Lutheran profession, who have nominal bishops, though no ordination but Presbyterian among them. To assert then, "that the foreign Churches do really prefer, desire, and some of them sigh for, episcopal ordination, and that it is not of choice, but of necessity, they

* II. Defence, page 50.

† Mr. Du Plessis (says Bishop Jer. Taylor) a man of honour and great learning, attests, that, at the first reformation, there were many archbishops and cardinals in Germany, France, Italy, &c. who joined in the reformation, whom they might, but did not, employ in their ordinations; and, therefore, says the Bishop, what necessity can be pretended in this case I would fain learn? Episc. asserted, &c. page 191.

"want

"want it," appears to me to be mere romance; an assertion which conveys the most severe reflection either on the judgement, or the credulity, of the person who makes it.

There is one farther consideration upon this head of ordination which I beg leave to mention; the rather, because, I think, that stress hath not been generally laid upon it which its importance deserves: which is,

5. Supposing the power of ordination to be, from Scripture, ever so clearly proved to belong solely to bishops, yet all the bishops of this realm refusing to ordain but upon unjustifiable terms, ordination, in this case, may justly be sought from Presbyters; and, when given by them, is of undoubted validity and regularity in the Christian Church.

The bishops require, from all candidates for ordination, as an indispensable term of receiving it from them, "That they subscribe willingly, and *ex animo*, to the XXXIX articles, that they are "all and every one of them agreeable to the word "of God: And that they solemnly declare their "unfeigned assent and consent to all and every "thing contained in and prescribed by the Book "of Common Prayer." This is a term of admission to the Christian ministry which they have no authority from Christ to insist upon, or to make; yea, a term, (if with humility I might say it,) which, by presuming to make, they offend greatly against the rights and liberty of the Christian Church, and against Jesus Christ, its only head; because, thousands may be duly qualified, according to the will of Christ, to act as ministers in his Church, who cannot with a good conscience comply with this term. By insisting, therefore, on it, they reject those whom Christ receives, and unlawfully keep out numbers of worthy persons from a part in the Christian ministry, who, by the appointment and will of God, and by the constitution of the Christian Church, have a right of admission to it, and whose ministry is greatly needed, and would be useful therein.

Even

Even admitting, therefore, that the sole power of ordination was originally lodged in the bishops, yet, if at any time they should enter into a combination to abuse and pervert this power; to lay a yoke upon Christian ministers which Christ never laid upon them, and which they ought not to bear, and, by this means, ordination cannot be had from them upon honourable and Christian terms, we may, under such circumstances, adopt our blessed Saviour's maxim, *that God will have mercy and not sacrifice*; that a mere ceremony is to give way to considerations of a moral nature; and that men, in other respects well qualified, when their service is needed, (of which themselves and the people are to be judges,) may act as ministers in the Church of Christ either without any ordination when it cannot honourably be had, or with such only, whether Presbyterian or popular, as can be obtained upon honourable terms.

These things I recommend, Sir, to your dispassionate and sober thoughts, not doubting but they will dispose you to be less severe than you have formerly been upon Presbyterian ordination, and more modest in your glorying in Episcopal ordination: and, whether those who now claim the sole power of ordination, and consider it as a trust committed to them by Christ, can justify their refusing it but upon compliance with such severe and unreasonable terms,—deserves maturely to be weighed; considering, that (as far as they bear any relation to Christ) they are not lords, but only servants, in his house, and that to him they must be accountable for so important a trust.

S E C T. X.

Of the Peoples RIGHT to CHOOSE their own Pastors.

THE next point to be considered is the right of the Christian laity to choose their own ministers. The charge given them in Scripture, *to try the spirits,—to beware of false prophets,—to take heed of what they hear,—you own,* “incontestibly” proves their right of judgement, or of examining “and proving doctrines; but the thing you want “to see is, how, from the right of judgement, the “right of choice can be deduced?”* But can a person of any discernment want to be shewn this? Does not the right of judging in things of religion necessarily imply not only a right, but a duty also, of acting agreeably to that judgment; or, in other words, a right of choice? Pray, why must a man examine? What! that he may have peradventure, the guilt and mortification of combating his own conscience, and acting contrary to his sense of things? What an absurdity were this! If the Christian laity were to *try the spirits*, and to examine and weigh the doctrine their pretended pastors taught, then, surely, they had a right to reject as their spiritual guides those pastors whom they found without the doctrines of Christ, or the guidance of his Spirit.

Accordingly, the Christian laity are charged, Rom. xvi. 17. *To mark (to consider, to observe carefully,) them that cause divisions and offences contrary to the Christian doctrine, and to avoid them.* Note, those who make new terms of communion in the Church of Christ, who set up new ceremonies of human invention, and command the subjects of Christ to yield obedience to them, and who cast out of the Church, or refuse to admit into it, those who comply not with such ceremonies and rites; these, Sir, are the men, (I appeal to your

* II. Defence, page 57.

own conscience, and to the bar of eternal Reason, at which all must shortly stand,) these are the men which *cause divisions and offences contrary to the Christian doctrine*; these, therefore, the Christian people are expressly commanded by the apostle to avoid. Attentively consider this, and you will never more condemn our separation from your Church: this single text alone justifies it before the world; and not only so, but proves it to be a most plain and indispensable duty.

The Church of England seems to have departed from, and most manifestly to have destroyed, the primitive apostolic and catholic communion, by setting up and enjoining other terms of Christian fellowship than the gospel hath enjoined, and rejecting those whom Christ receives. From this Church, therefore, upon Christian principles, and by the command of St. Paul, we are to withdraw ourselves, and to separate.

But, to return; the manner in which the place of Judas, the traitor, was filled up, Acts i. and in which the seven deacons were chosen, Acts vi. shews it plainly to be the constitution of the great Founder of the Christian Church, that its ministers should be appointed by the election of the people. An apostle was an officer of extraordinary rank, whom it seemed in a peculiar manner the prerogative of Christ solely to appoint to that office; but neither doth he do this, nor yet order the apostolic college to fill up this vacancy by their own authority and discretion; but (for an instruction, no doubt, to future ages) he commanded the Christian people (the whole number of believers, as far as appears, that were then at Jerusalem) to choose out two, and present them before him, of whom he would appoint one to the vacant apostolate. A strong presumptive evidence, every one must grant, in support of popular elections.

And, when the seven deacons were to be appointed to manage the Church's stock, though the apostles were then vested with a fulness of power, and had the *gift of discerning spirits*, (in both which they had no successors,) and were therefore

far better qualified to have chosen persons for that office than the multitude of Lay-Christians, yet, behold, as a standing monument to after-times, in whom this elective power was to rest in the Church, they took not upon them authoritatively to nominate, but directed *the people to look out seven men of good report*. In obedience to this direction, and in pursuance of their right, (as the Lord's freed men, put into a happy state, where none were to have authority, or dominion, over others, but all were to be brethren,) the *whole multitude*, it is said *chose*, or, as you learnedly render it, PICKED OUT, *of their number seven men*. Not to differ on small things, Sir, if you will allow that the Christian laity have a right to PICK out their ministers, as the the apostles, with their superior powers and gifts of *discerning spirits*, allowed the laity in their times, this is all we ask.

As to the practice of the antient Church, it is not I, as you suggest, but a writer of your own,* high enough for Church-power, who says, "That the people had votes in the choice of bishops all must grant, and it can be only ignorance, and folly, that pleads the contrary." I own, I am surprised at your so stiffly contesting this point, when the stream of all, even your own writers, beats so violently against you. Clemens Romanus,† a cotemporary of the apostles, says, they appointed bishops, *by the consent of the whole Church*. How often does Cyprian say, "Nihil fiat nisi consentiente plebe." *Let nothing be done but by the consent of the people*. Again, "Deus instruit ordinationes sacerdotales non nisi sub populi assistentis conscientia fieri oportere,"‡ *God appoints that sacerdotal ordinations should not be made without the assistance and consent of the people*. Himself he declares *chosen* to his office, "Favore plebis, populi suffragio." *By the favour and vote of the people*. Your criticism on the word *suffragium* (which all the learned know properly and constantly signifies a *vote*, as it undoubt-

* Lowth.

† Epist. ad Cor. Cap. 54:

‡ Epist. 67.

edly does in one, if not both the very instances you bring to disprove it) is too slender to deserve a particular consideration; especially as you offer not a word against that other express testimony, quoted from the same Father, which indisputably shews the sense in which he uses *suffragium*. "Plebs maximam habet potestatem vel eligendi dignos sacerdotes vel indignos recusandi." *To the people belongs the chief power either of choosing worthy ministers or of rejecting the unworthy.* This is a testimony, full to the point, which you could not gainsay, and therefore you wisely overlook it.

The constitutions of the apostles decree, "That he who is to be ordained a bishop must be chosen by all the people as the most worthy."*

The canons (called the apostles) "depose such bishops as are chosen by the civil magistrate."†

The famous Council of Nice, in a synodical epistle to the Church of Alexandria, forbid "any to be ordained bishops without the election of the people."

The Council of Constantinople, anno 382, say they ordained Nectarius, "cuncta decernente civitate," *all the city decreeing it*; and Flavianus, "omni ecclesia decernente," *according to the determination of the whole Church.*

The Council of Carthage, anno 394, say "a bishop is to be ordained, cum omni consensu clericorum & laicorum, with the universal consent both of the clergy and laity."

Leo V. (Father Paul confesses,‡) has amply shewn "that the ordination of a bishop could not be lawful or valid which was not required and sought by the people, and by them approved; which is said by all the Fathers of those times;" and adds, "Qui præfuturus est omnibus ab omnibus eligatur," || *Let him that is to preside over all be chosen by all.*

The Council of Paris, anno 552, require "the

* Const. Apof. L. 8, Cap. 4. † Cap. Apof. 30, in Photio.

‡ Benef. Mat. Sect. 29. || Leon. Epist. 89. Cap. 5.

“ election of the people and clergy on pain of ex-
 “ communication.” Chrylostom was chosen bishop
 of Constantinople by the “ common consent of all
 “ persons, clergy as well as laity.”* In the choice of
 St. Martin, the votes of the people carried it against
 the votes of the bishops themselves, the *people in-*
sisting upon their privilege.†

Finally ; the mighty contests and struggles, of
 which ecclesiastical story is full, into which the
 great cities frequently fell at the election of their
 bishops, put beyond all doubt the antiquity of the
 practice. That at Antioch, when Eustathius was
 chosen described by Eusebius, (de Vita Constant.
 l. 3. ch. 59, 60.) where also is the Emperor’s letter
 to the people of Antioch, (another memorable mo-
 nument full to the purpose,) exhorting them not
 to choose Eusebius as their bishop, but to think of
 some other person :—that, at Cæsarea, described
 by Greg. Nazian. ‡—that at Alexandria, by Eva-
 grius :||—that, at Constantinople, several times,
 by Sozomen, &c.—that, at Ephesus, by Chrylostom :
 —at Versailles, by Ambrose :—at Milan, by So-
 crates :—at Rome, by Ammianus Marcellinus, &c.
 —It hence evidently appears what the senti-
 ments and practice were of the Churches in those
 ancient times. So that so warm a champion for
 Church-authority, as your zealous Dr. Wall, is
 forced to confess, “ that it is a piece of history
 “ which cannot fairly be denied, that, among the
 “ primitive Christians, the people used to have
 “ their suffrage in the choice of Church-officers ;
 “ and that this is the most regular way ; that it
 “ continued many years ; and those Christians,
 “ who have gone about to mend this way, have
 “ made it worse.”¶

These, now, are the grounds on which this
 right of the people stands. And thus impregnable
 is the post which you so adventurously attack. Your

* Socrat. Schol. L. 6. Ch. 2.

† Sulp. Sev. Cap. 7.

‡ Orat. 19.

|| L. 2. C. 6.

¶ Dr. Wall’s Hist. Inf. Bap. Vol. II. page 334. Nay, if
 any Presbyter was created a bishop by imperial mandates,
 the people were enjoined to renounce him.

reasoning upon this head is truly extraordinary; which, in short, is this: "A man does well who meekly attends the ministry of a good, able, orthodox, minister, by whomsoever provided; but the king, bishops, lord-chancellor, gentry, &c. are more competent judges of the goodness and orthodoxy of clergymen than the common people;"* therefore the people ought not to judge for themselves in these matters, but to submit meekly to the determination of the king, lord-chancellor, bishops, &c. A most excellent doctrine this! admirably fit to promote Popery in Spain, Mahomedanism in Turkey, Paganism in Japan. It would follow from this principle, as I have already urged, that the brave Protestants in France have unwarrantably and wickedly withdrawn from the ministers which the king and bishops had set over them. "Yes, (you reply,) undoubtedly they have, if their kings and bishops set over them, as they do here, good orthodox ministers." But could you think, Sir, such an answer would be received without a smile? Pray, who is to judge of the goodness, ability, and orthodoxy, of the minister? Not the people, according to your scheme, but the king and bishops, who are more competent judges. Well, then, the rulers in France are more competent judges of the goodness, ability, and orthodoxy, of ministers than their Hugonot subjects; to their superior judgment, therefore, they ought to submit. But are the Hugonots in France, I beseech you, more competent judges of the ability of the clergy on whom they ought to attend than the people of England? Or, have the king and bishops here more authority from God to judge for their subjects than the king and bishops there? It is strange that a gentleman of your discernment should entangle himself in so inconsistent a scheme!

* II Letter, page 9. II. Defence, page 63.

S E C T. XI.

The BURIAL-OFFICE and ATRANASIAN CREED most apparently inconsistent and repugnant to each other.

WITH what truth, Sir, and justice you drew your own character, *as a sorry advocate for the Church,** the public will judge; but, that you have shewn no defect of courage, every one must admit. You proceed, in what you call your *soldierly manner,†* and, like a bold and intrepid champion, undertake to defend what, I believe, few, except yourself, would not desert as a forlorn and unteneable post, viz. your Church's thirteen times a year pronouncing, concerning all Arians and Socinians, that they *cannot be saved, that they do without doubt perish everlastingly*; and yet, with equal solemnity, pronouncing, concerning these self-same persons dying in their heresies, that *God has in his great mercy taken them to himself, and that you hope they rest in Christ.* I must own I did not expect that you would seriously attempt to reconcile such a contradiction as this. But let us hear how you perform. "When we declare that Arians and Socinians perish everlastingly, our sense is, that their heresies are damnable, and that they, upon the account of them, are liable to damnation; notwithstanding which, there may be room for pardon in particular cases; and that, when one of these comes to die, it may be charitably hoped, that his is such a case, and we may lawfully declare that we do not quite despair concerning him:‡" That is to say, you damn the heresy, but save the heretic; a piece of spiritual legerdemain, which, I own, I cannot comprehend. But does not all the world see, Sir, that the creed plainly and incontestibly refers to persons only, not to things; and absolutely pronounces upon their final cir-

* II. Defence, page 128.

† Dedic. page 15.

‡ II. Defence, page 151.

cumstances, or state? *Whosoever will be saved, it is necessary, before all things, that he hold the faith there defined; which faith, except every one doth keep whole and undefiled, he shall, without doubt, perish everlastingly.* Will you say that this speaks only of the heresy, and that it does not expressly pronounce upon the condition, or state, of the person who holds it? And that it only declares him to be liable to, or in some danger of, damnation, but not that he shall *without doubt*, or most certainly, be damned?

Again, does the creed leave any room to hope in particular cases, when, at five distinct places, it determines absolutely against all hope, and in such strong and express language as most evidently reaches, and was intended to reach, to every particular case?—*Whosoever,—every one,—which except a man believe,—he shall, without doubt, perish everlastingly.* If, notwithstanding these decisive and most peremptory declarations, the creed still leaves room to hope for the salvation of the avowed deniers and oppugners of this faith, then the use of language is lost, there is no meaning in words, truth and falsehood are the same, and a man may honestly subscribe the Koran of Mahommed, and reconcile it with a profession of the gospel of Christ. Besides, what contemptible chicanery and trifling is it to talk “of room for pardon, and of hope in particular cases,” when you solemnly declare this hope universally, and in every case; and to say “When one of these comes to die;” whereas, you do it over all when they come to die: and, “that you do not quite despair concerning the man,” when you assume the language of confidence, and in the most explicit terms, *thank God that he hath in great mercy taken him to himself; and pray, that, when you die, yourself may rest in Christ, as you hope this Arian or Socinian doth.* Is this the language of a person who does not quite despair concerning the state of a departed heretic? Such trifling only hurts a cause; you had much better have done here as with the burial-office and absolution, have
 passed

passed it over in silence, and not attempted to defend what every one sees to be incapable of defence.

But the *unfeigned assent and consent* which you have solemnly given, and which every clergyman is obliged most solemnly to give, sticks, no doubt greatly, and makes you strain every nerve in endeavouring to let it pass. Such potions, indeed, must be bitter : God grant they be not malignant ! To numbers in your own Church it cannot but be difficult, in God's presence and before his Church, to give their *unfeigned assent and consent to all and every thing* contained in the Athanasian creed, with all its explications, limitations, and damnatory clauses ;—a creed whose limitations they condemn, whose explications they deride, and whose damnatory clauses they heartily detest and abhor :—yet, in God's presence, and before his Church, I repeat it with astonishment ! to declare their *unfeigned assent and consent* to them all, is a potion, surely, which, though sweetened with the noblest Church-preferments, a man might justly dread to swallow ! You wonder, Sir, perhaps, to see Deism, Infidelity, Popery, a corruption of manners, and contempt of holy things, prevail throughout the land : I acknowledge, I do not. For, when those who are to be the great examples and teachers of righteousness too generally enter upon their sacred office with a dangerous violation of it, subscribing articles they do not believe, preaching contrary to their subscriptions, declaring solemnly their unfeigned assent to what they do not approve, but, perhaps, heartily detest, and prostituting the holy rites and offices of their religion to political and sordid ends, why should it be thought strange if Popery and Infidelity greatly gain ground ? And what wonder if they should still more fatally prevail ?”*

S E C T.

* See a like manifest inconsistency between the XXVth article and the office for confirmation. The article says “ Confirmation has not any visible sign, or ceremony, ordained of God.” But the office commands the bishop to
“ declare,

S E C T. XII.

*The Scottish Presbyterian ESTABLISHMENT
vindicated.*

IF Schism be so dangerous and damnable a thing as you represent it,* methinks your solemn warnings against it ought not to be confined merely to the sinners on this side the Tweed, but from the profusion of your charity to the English Dissenters,† a little of it should extend also to your episcopal brethren, the Dissenters from the Church by law established in Scotland. But these, such is your partiality, instead of censuring, you endeavour to justify; yea, to justify upon such principles as certainly expose yourself to heavy censure and rebuke. You allege, "That they did not separate from the Presbyterians, but the Presbyterians from them:—that, by tumults, false musters, and other misrepresentations of persons and things, the Presbyterians got themselves established;—but that, having renounced episcopacy, and their ordination being irregular, their communion can neither be safe nor lawful."‡ Behold, in these last words, that schismatical dividing spirit from which you endeavour to vindicate your Church! A severe and unchristian sentence! by which you unchurch at once, and cut off from Christian fellowship, all

declare, "That he hath laid his hands on the confirmed" (after the example of the holy Apostles) to certify them "by this sign of God's favour."—Behold an evident contrariety! but to both parts unfeigned assent, and consent, is obsequiously given.

It is something (more than) odd, a learned bishop of your own has lately observed, to have two creeds established in the same Church, in one of which those are declared accursed who deny the Son to be of the same hypostasis with the Father: and, in the other, it is declared they cannot be saved, but perish everlastingly, who do not assert that there is one hypostasis of the Father and another of the Son. Essay on Spirit, Sect. 146.

* II. Defence, page 63.

† Dedication, page 15.

‡ II. Defence, pages 16, 145.

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the foreign reformed Churches, a glorious and great company, and pronounce them not to belong to the visible Church of Christ. They have all renounced episcopacy, in your sense of the word; their ordinations therefore you declare irregular, being only Presbyterian, and their communion to be neither safe nor lawful, i. e., it is a dangerous and wicked thing to hold communion with them. Your own sober thoughts, Sir, and the episcopal authority under which you are placed, will, I doubt not, correct you for so immodest a censure. To assist the former in this good office I would offer two things to your serious review.

1. That the very canons of the Church of England, to which you have sworn obedience, acknowledge the Church of Scotland to be a true Sister-church; commanding all its clergy to pray for the Churches of England, Scotland, and Ireland, as parts of Christ's holy catholic Church, which is dispersed throughout the world. Canon LV. Note, the Church of Scotland, when these canons were made, was Presbyterian as it is now. And,

2. Consider, that the Presbyterian Church in North Britain is established by the very same authority, and rests upon the same law, as the episcopal Church in South Britain.

The very same legislative powers, which established and formed the one, have likewise established the other; if then, it be schism, rebellion, and contumacy, against governors to separate from the latter, it is also most certainly the very same to separate from the former. As for "Tumults and false musters, by which it got itself established," you should have known that the sense of the Scottish nation was, perhaps, ten times more general for Presbyterianism, in the reigns of King William and Queen Anne, when that form was established there, than the sense of the English nation was for Protestantism, in the reigns of King Edward and Queen Elizabeth, when the episcopal Church of England was formed and established here. But, if the settlement of Protestantism in
England,

England, by the crown and parliament of these realms, was valid and right, even though the bishops and clergy were almost unanimously against it, surely Presbyterianism in Scotland, enacted and established by the same crown and parliament must be equally valid, especially as the voice of their clergy, as well as their laity, ran not only violently, but generally that way.

A grand convention of the states in Scotland, at the Revolution, in a claim of rights which they presented as containing the fundamental and unalterable laws of that kingdom, declare, "That the reformation in Scotland having been begun by a parity among the clergy, all prelacy in that Church was a great and unsupportable grievance to that kingdom." King William, however, (Bishop Burnet* informs us,) "assured the episcopal party there, that he would do all that he could to preserve them (established,) granting a full toleration to the Presbyterians, provided they concurred in the new settlement of the kingdom, (i. e. in renouncing King James, and owning himself as their sovereign.) But the bishops and their followers resolved to adhere firmly to the interests of King James, and so declaring in a body, with much zeal, in opposition to the new settlement, it was not possible for the king to preserve that (episcopal) government there, all those who expressed their zeal for him being equally zealous against that order."

This establishment of Presbytery was again, in the most solemn manner, enacted and confirmed by the Queen (Anne) and parliament of England when the Union was made. You speak, therefore, of this affair, Sir, in more coarse and disrespectful language than is either decent or true, when you talk of insurrections, false musters, misrepresentations, &c. It was done upon the most mature and grave deliberations both of King William and Queen Anne, and of the lords and commons of both kingdoms in parliament assembled: it has re-

* Hist. of his Times, Vol. IV. pages 42, 43, 12mo.

ceived;

ceived the most sacred sanction a human law can receive; and is made as essential and fundamental a part of our constitution as the Church of England itself. Take heed, therefore, that you are not preparing a rod for your own correction; and lest by teaching men to argue away the legality and reverence of the Presbyterian establishment in North Britain, you incautiously give a mortal stab to your favourite Church, which is established here. You may please to observe also, that, when you call the episcopal Dissenters there the Church of Scotland, it is with just the same propriety, decency, and good sense, as if the Dissenters should call themselves the Church of England here.

Hence, also, it appears, that what you offer in mitigation of the Jacobitism and rebellion of the Episcopalians in Scotland (pages 16, 17) has one material flaw, which is, that it is not founded upon truth. For, you represent the loss of their establishment as being the cause of their disaffection; whereas, the very reverse is exactly the case; and they lost their establishment because they were disaffected, because they rejected the revolution, and firmly adhered to King James. King William would have preserved them if they would have acknowledged his government: this they obstinately refused, and therefore they fell a just sacrifice to their blind attachment to a tyrannical and popish prince.

As to the present loyalty of the two parties in that kingdom, the Presbyterians and Episcopalians, which you have drawn into comparison, you have done one of them great wrong in representing them both as having been, perhaps, alike deeply engaged* in the late impious rebellion there.† If, from the disposition of the clergy, that of the laity may be reasonably presumed, there are two important facts, to omit many others, which will dispose every impartial person, I believe, to view that affair in a very different light: one is the letter of the royal commander,

* Defence, page 15.

† This part of these Letters was published two years after the Rebellion in 1745.

the Duke of Cumberland, to the General Assembly at Edinburgh, in which he expresses a strong sense " of the very steady and laudable conduct " of the clergy of that Church through the whole " course of that wicked and unnatural rebellion ; " and says, I owe it to them in justice to testify, " that, upon all occasions, I have received from " them professions of the most inviolable attach- " ment to his majesty's person and government, " and have always found them ready and for- " ward to act in their several stations in all such " affairs as they could be useful in, though often " to their own great hazard."—Upon an impar- tial account, I believe, the balance will be found, by every disinterested person, to stand thus,—of the **PRESBYTERIAN ESTABLISHED CLERGY** there was not one in fifty, in the whole body, but heartily wished success to the arms of his ma- jesty King George : of the **EPISCOPAL DIS- SENTING CLERGY**, not one in fifty of the whole body but heartily wished success to the arms of those Frenchmen and Italians who came over to invade us, and to unite with the rebels in over- throwing our constitution, and establishing an ab- jured and popish pretender to the throne.

The other fact is, the necessity which the legi- slature have found themselves under, by new acts of parliament, in two different sessions, more nar- rowly to watch, and to lay under fresh restraints, the episcopal Churches in Scotland. These are well known to be fruitful and fatal sources of jaco- bitism and disaffection ; dangerous seminaries, where men are formed and nourished up in allegi- ance to a popish prince, and in avowed aversion and disloyalty to their rightful sovereign King George. Though it be too true, then, that there were some of the laity of the established Church, by some occasional resentment or unhappy occur- rence, hurried into that black affair : they herein departed from their settled and professed princi- ples ; whereas, the Episcopalians acted quite in character, agreeably to the fixed sentiments and affections of their party, when they prayed and
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fought heartily for the destruction of our happy government, and for the advancement of a popish pretender to the throne. To say, then "that the "Scottish Presbyterians were, perhaps, as deeply "engaged in the late odious rebellion as the episcopal Dissenters there," is to scatter censures at random, to confront the plainest evidence, and to represent, in a very partial and injurious manner, their conduct, as you have repeatedly done that of your dissenting brethren in England.

S E C T. XIII.

Of the Church's AUTHORITY in controversies of Faith.

THIS is a claim, which, to the grief of its real friends, and to the triumph of its foes, your Church hath set up, and obliges all its clergy solemnly to subscribe. For, it is really no other than an invasion of the divine prerogative; and in the language of the Holy Spirit, *a sitting in the temple of God shewing itself that it is God.** It is claiming an honour, as due to a few frail and fallible men, which is, in fact, due only to the omniscient and infallible God, who has appointed Jesus Christ to be the sole Lawgiver and King in the Church. It is the very root of Antichristianism, the prop upon which the whole system of Popery rests: it came from the Church of Rome, and thither it directly leads; nor can the reformation be ever justified, or the Church of England supported, while this claim is admitted.

For, if the *Church hath authority in controversies of faith*, the Church of Rome, surely, had it before the Church of England; yea, had it at the very time when the reformation was made. Cranmer, then, and Ridley, Luther and Calvin, were guilty of great petulancy and ecclesiastical rebellion in refusing to submit to the Church's solemn determinations concerning image-worship, transub-

* 2 Thess. ii. 4.

stantiation, &c. and in proudly setting up their own private opinion against the authoritative decisions of their ecclesiastical superiors, *to whom they owed submission, and whom they ought to have obeyed.* This claim of your Church, Sir, (I must again assert it) is an unanswerable argument in favour of Popery, which hath already drawn thousands, no doubt, and is continually perverting multitudes from your church to that of Rome. Nor can all the learning or wit of the whole clergy of the land withstand the force of a single Jesuit, let him be armed with and skilfully wield this dangerous weapon the XXth article of your Church.

It was the fatal influence of this article, I observed, that seduced King James II. and the great Chillingworth into the Romish tenets. These instances you contest with me. But, as to the first, you are guilty of an unhappy oversight, in confounding two things, in the quotation from Burnet's History and considering them as one, when they are most apparently distinct. The *authority of the Church* and the *tradition from the apostles in support of episcopacy*, are, in the bishop's account of King James's perversion, most manifestly two several and different things; whereas, you artfully endeavour to represent it, "that by the *authority of the Church*, is meant only, the *authority of its traditions, or testimony, concerning episcopacy.*"* But do you not know, and did not the king know, that the *authority of the Church* is one thing, and its *tradition* in support of episcopacy another? Does not the Church, besides *this tradition*, claim to itself also an *authority in controversies of faith*? And did not the king wisely and rightly judge, "that there was more reason to submit to the *catholic Church* than to one *particular Church*?"—that, if the Church of England had its authority, the Church of Rome had it long before her, and upon better grounds than she:—that, if the Church of England by its authority might solemnly determine that Christ went

* II. Defence, page 137.

down into hell, and that Arians and Socinians are undoubtedly damned when they die, and perish everlastingly, but yet there is hope, when they die, that they *rest in Christ*, and are *taken to God in mercy*, the Church of Rome, by the same authority, might solemnly determine that images are to be worshipped, and that a piece of bread is transubstantiated into the body of Christ, there being nothing in the one at all more incredible or absurd than in the other? I own I see not but, upon this principle, the king acted right; and that every one, that believes this XXth article of your Church ought to follow his example, to immediately forsake it, and go over to the Church of Rome.*

Thus acted the renowned Chillingworth. He thought there was a *necessity of an infallible living Judge of controversy*; or, that there always was, and must be, some Church upon earth that could not err; which, in other words, is, *that had authority in controversies of faith*: finding, therefore, the Church of Rome claiming it with a better grace, and upon fairer and stronger grounds, than the Church of England could pretend to do, he too hastily went over to the Church of Rome, because he had not at that time so thoroughly examined the subject as to see that neither the one nor the other had any right to that authority which they respectively claimed; but he afterwards saw his error, and well atoned, by his incomparable writings, for that precipitant step. “But he was too great a master of reason (you say) to take authority for the same thing with *infallibility*, under a

* In a debate on a bill against blasphemy, &c. brought into the house of lords, anno 1721, the Earl of Peterborough frankly said, Though he was for a parliamentary king, yet he did not desire to have a parliamentary God, or a parliamentary religion: and, if the House were for such an one, he would go to Rome, and endeavour to be chosen Cardinal; for, he had rather sit in the conclave than with their lordships upon those terms. Tindal's Hist. Eng. Vol. IV. page 647.

Dr. Wm. Tindal was also, by the same principles, perverted to the Church of Rome. Vide Second Defence of the Rights, &c. p. 79.

“different expression; and that, therefore, our Church, in claiming the former, did, in effect, claim the latter.”* Whatever Chillingworth’s views might have been at this time, of the nice distinction which you wish to make, nothing is more plain than that the claims are undoubtedly the same. For, that, to whomsoever God gives *authority in controversies of faith* he gives also *infallibility*, incontestibly appears hence, viz. that otherwise a man might really have authority from the God of Truth to lead men into error; he might have a power, a right from heaven, to seduce and to deceive. The absurdity of which is so apparent that it needs not farther to be exposed.

To talk, therefore, of the Church’s limited authority “to decide controversies *according to the rule of Scripture and universal tradition*; and “that these decisions (so long as they evidently “contradict not that rule) oblige her members to “obedience,” is quite trifling, and beneath the character of a rational divine: for, who, I ask, is to judge whether the Church’s decisions are, or are not, *according to the rule of Scripture and universal tradition*:—the Church herself, or her members? If the Church herself, and not her members, then the authority is absolute, a popish tyranny is erected, and a blind unlimited obedience takes place. But, if the members are themselves to judge, and are no farther to yield obedience than they themselves see the decisions to be according to the *rule of Scripture*, then all authority is overthrown; the determinations of the gravest synods are to be weighed in the balance of every man’s private judgement, and, according as they appear to him to agree with Scripture or not, are absolutely to stand or fall. Between authority and no-authority, in matters of faith, there is no possible medium: as for limited and unlimited, they are only cant expressions, to which you affix no determinate ideas; nor can you pretend to tell the world, what limits the authority has,—where

* II. Defence, page 136.

it is circumscribed,—in whom it is lodged,—and how far its bounds go!

Accordingly, you find that noble champion of the Protestant cause, when escaped from the pernicious snares in which his notions of Church-authority had at first unhappily entangled him, expressing himself thus: “For my part, after long and impartial search, I profess plainly that I cannot find any rest for the sole of my foot but upon this rock only, namely, that the Bible, the Bible I say ONLY, is the religion of Protestants. I see plainly, and with my own eyes, that there are Popes against Popes, Councils against Councils, some Fathers against others, the same Fathers against themselves, a consent of Fathers of one age against a consent of Fathers of another age, the Church of one age against the Church of another age;—in a word, there is no sufficient certainty, but of Scripture only, for any considering man to build upon. This, therefore, and this only, I have reason to believe. I will take no man’s liberty of judgment from him, neither shall any man take mine from me. I am sure that God does not, and therefore, that men ought not to require any more of any man than this, *To believe the Scripture to be God’s word, to endeavour to find the true sense of it, and to live according to it.*”^{*} These are the true principles of Protestantism and of Christianity, to which your Church must necessarily come back, if ever she would maintain her ground against the dangerous assaults which Popery is making on her; for, as long as she stands hampered with that perplexing and unhappy article, (the XXth,) she must remain the dupe and the jest of insulting Jesuits and unbelievers, and be content to see her members led in triumph away from her by hundreds in their snares.

^{*} Chillingworth’s Rel. Prot. Chap. VI. Sect. 56, page 379.

S E C T. XIV.

*Of the POSTURE in which our LORD and his
APOSTLES ate the SACRAMENTAL SUPPER.*

THIS is the only point I shall at present farther consider. Concerning which I observe,

1. That it is most certain that they ate it in their *table-posture*, whatever that was; it was the posture in which **they** were wont to take their food at meals. This is all we need to know to justify our practice. Our Lord and his apostles took the sacrament in an eating, not in an adoring, posture. Let no man, then, think himself wiser, nor pretend that he can take it in a more humble, devout, and fit, posture than they. And,

2. Though it was, perhaps, somewhat different from the posture we at present use, (as there are several different ways of *sitting* in different countries and times,) yet there was no word, in the English language, so proper by which to render *καθήμενοι*, and *καθίσταμενοι*, as *sitting*, which our translators, and I after them, presumed to use; for which I have fallen under your rebuke.

You tell me, page 148, "that the posture was *lying down, or along*;" and yet, just after, "that it was *with the upper part of the body erect*;" and "advise me to try how conveniently a man may eat and drink in that posture." But, to *lay my body down, or along*, and keep its *upper parts erect*, is a position so extraordinary, that, without the help of some posture-master, or your farther good instructions, I despair of ever compassing so arduous a point.

That it was the custom of the antients, both Romans and Greeks, to *sit* at their meals, cannot be denied; *ἠμεῖς δεινόμενοι*, Homer. *Odyss.*—And Virgil, who wrote near the time of our Saviour, says, *Soliti patres considerare mensis*.* *Æneid.* VII.

* Porro considerare, non in lecto recumbere ad mensas heroicis temporibus morem fuisse diximus. Not. Delp. in Loc. & in *Æneid*, I. L. 702.

The custom of *lying*, or *leaning*, at table, was not introduced among the Romans till the primitive severity of their manners was corrupted by the effeminacy and luxury of the East; and, even then, the posture of *sitting* was retained in their sacred feasts in the Capitol.*

And, as for the usage of the Jews, Dr. Lightfoot, Sir, is an authority, which, if you presume to attack without being strongly armed, the blow will surely rebound, and hurt yourself. But the learned doctor assures us, "That, at other meals, they either sat as we do, with their bodies erect; or, when they would enlarge themselves to more freedom of feasting, or refreshment, they sat upon the beds, and leaned upon the table on their left elbow. But, on the Passover-night, they used this leaning-posture, being the posture of free men, in memorial of their freedom. And thus are we to understand those texts which mention John's lying on Jesus's breast, and leaning on his bosom, (John xiii. 25, xxi. 20;) not, as some have pictured him, reposing himself, or lolling, on the breast of Jesus, contrary to all order and decency: whereas, the manner of sitting together was only thus; Jesus, leaning on the table with his left elbow, and so turning his face and breast away from the table on one side, John sat in the same posture next before him, with his back towards Jesus; his breast not so near as that John's back and Jesus's breast did touch one another, but at such a distance as that there was space for Jesus to use his right hand upon the table to reach his meat at pleasure; and so for all the rest, as they sat in like manner: for, it is a strange fancy that they lay upon the bed before the table, one tumbling (or lolling) upon the breast of another."*

Valer. Max. L. 2, 3.

† Lightfoot's Temp. Serv. Chap. xiii. Vide also Rainold. Censura de Libris Apoc. Prælect. 79. Altare Damascen. Cap. 8. page 552.

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I have now followed you Sir, much farther than I intended to have done. I hope it will not be expected that I remark upon all the weak and indefensible things your defences contain : there are I believe, five times as many as those I have here noted, upon which it would tire the reader's patience, as well as greatly try my own, particularly to touch. As for the discipline of the Church of England, its best friends I am persuaded, wish, and common prudence would have advised, that you had been quite silent on that head. "Whoever thinks seriously, (says one of the greatest of your present bishops) of the manner, causes, or objects of our excommunications, generally speaking, should methinks, in pity forbear to mention the word."* Your ecclesiastical courts, to whom this discipline is committed, are justly not only reckoned, but spoken of, among yourselves, as THE VERY DREGS OF YOUR CONSTITUTION. And, upon your own honest confession of the scandalous and ruined state in which Church discipline lies among you, (quoted, pages 56, 57, of my second letter,) I am well content to let that matter rest.

As for the persecuting and dividing spirit the Church of England has shewn, I think it the easiest of all points (and so, I believe, does every one who knows its real history) to support with abundant evidence the charges on this head. But, as both Churchmen and Dissenters, it is hoped, are now growing into a better spirit, and their common interest as Britons, as Protestants, and as Christians, calls loudly for a stricter union, I wave, at present, any farther prosecution of a point which might rather tend to widen than heal the unhappy breach. Upon your own principles, as to persecution, also, I forbear to remark, though most easy to be proved both unprotestant and unchristian, the merits of the cause between us being therein little concerned.

* Hoadly's Answer to the Represent. pages 38, 39.

If this review of the controversy, which your Letters have called up, shall be a means of holding forth to both the contending parties the several defects of their ecclesiastical constitution, and of rendering them more candid and benevolent to each other, and shall at all prepare the way for a coalition between them, I shall think it an auspicious and very happy event.

"The readiness which (you say) my Lords the bishops have shewn, and will shew, to come to a temper with their dissenting brethren,"* will, I doubt not, be gratefully and readily accepted by them, and returned by a correspondent readiness to lay aside all prejudices, (for prejudices, I am free to own there are doubtless, among us,) and to comply with any just and reasonable proposal for the accomplishing so important and valuable an end.

I hear it with great pleasure, if what you speak is upon good authority, "That, if parting with the ceremonies and taking away a few indifferent things, will close the breach, you are satisfied that it will not long remain open."†—— And, in return, declare, I verily believe, that, if such concessions as a great part of our governors, both in Church and State, would, I presume, think not unreasonable to make, were made to the Dissenters, there would be no unbecoming stiffness, or aversion, be shewn by the most considerable part of them. May heaven dispose the minds of all who have power, to further and help on this desirable event! *that, with one mind, and with one mouth, we may glorify God, and unite our common zeal against a growing common enemy; and may receive one another, but not to doubtful disputations!* For if we still continue to worry and weaken one another, there is reason to fear lest we finally be destroyed one of another. These things I recommend, Sir, to your consideration: and shall only farther say that as I have not been able (and am persuaded never shall be) to get you

* Dedication, page 12. † Ibid pages 13. 14.

to speak out and openly and plainly tell us,—Whom you mean by the Church, “to which Dissenters “owe subjection, which hath power to decree “rites, and authority in points of faith; and, by “withdrawing from, and rejecting the authority “of which, we are guilty of a DANGEROUS and “DAMNABLE sin:”—Whether it is the Pope with his Cardinals, or the King with his Parliament, or the Archbishop with his Bishops, or the Bishop of every diocese with his Dean and Chapter attending:—Nor will you so much as pretend to shew us the charter which has vested them with this high power,—nor will you say, to what things, or how far it extends,—though these are essential points upon which the controversy between us entirely depends:—You must excuse me from paying any farther regard to your lucubrations on these things. I have neither time nor inclination to dispute about a scheme which you affect to wrap in obscurity, and which you are afraid to lay open and avow before the world. I shall, therefore, take my leave of the present debate, unless any thing which you may farther offer on this subject, should render it necessary for me to renew it. But though I choose not to bear you company in the disagreeable employment of “*groping in the dark*,” you will, nevertheless, believe me to be,

Sir,

Your very sincere friend,

And humble servant,

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THE
Dissenting Gentleman's
POSTSCRIPT

TO HIS

Three LETTERS to Mr. WHITE.

Containing some REMARKS on that Gentleman's
APPENDIX.

S I R,

THE extraordinary remark which introduces your Appendix,—That views of worldly interest encourage and support our dissent from the establishment,—I shall leave to the universal laugh of your readers for a confutation, and pass on to points of greater moment in debate. To begin with your first: *Of Church-power, and in whom lodged.*

The Church of England claims, in her articles and canons,* to have power from God to *decree other ceremonies and rites of worship, and to make other terms of Christian communion*, than either Christ, or his apostles, ever made or decreed, and to *have authority in controversies of faith.*

This high and important power she sovereignly exerts. You, as her zealous advocate, endeavour to support her in it; and charge all the Dissenters as guilty of a very crying and dangerous sin in not submitting to it. The Dissenters, I have told you, will readily own the charge, and return im-

* Art. XX. and Canons XXVII. XXIX. XXX.

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mediately to your Church, if you will gratify them in these two most reasonable requests; 1. Tell them plainly, who and what it is you mean by the Church. And, 2. Prove it to have this power vested in it by God.

Your advocates for Church-power, I know love always to deal in generals, and will twist a thousand ways rather than explain their scheme, and be forced to speak out: but you, Sir, being a gentleman of singular intrepidity, and affecting to do things in what you call *a soldierly manner*, when your late Appendix came forth, protesting to treat expressly of *Church-power*, and in *whom lodged*, I hoped to see the point, all disguises apart, openly and frankly handled, and that a certain judgement might now be formed what your sentiments were. But, alas, vain were these hopes! Not all the invitations and provocations I have used can draw you from that cover where you artfully lie concealed in darkness and obscurity. 'Though the regard you owe to truth, to justice, to the souls of your dissenting brethren, and to your own reputation, most strongly obliged you to it, yet you have not, durst not, honestly and fairly tell us, *who the persons are* whom God hath trusted with this power; nor have you produced the least shadow of a charter from heaven investing them with it.

In most manifest contradiction; indeed, to our constitution, our laws, our articles, and canons, to which you have solemnly sworn and subscribed, and even to your very self (as I shall presently shew,) you continue to affirm "That this power is not at all in the civil magistrate; that he hath declared and recognised it not to be in himself, but that it is solely in the pastors and governors of the Church." But, when I repeatedly press and provoke you to say, who these governors and pastors are—(are they the archbishops, or the bishops, or the deans and chapters of every diocese, or the priest in every parish, or the clergy met in convocation?)—you are sour, and will not answer. No: if Dissenters must have these knotty points solved, let them seek it from other hands.

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But what Idea, Sir, will the public form of a scholar, a divine, a some-time fellow of a learned college, arraigning us before their bar as guilty of high crimes in not submitting to Church-power, writing tract upon tract to persuade and reduce us to it, coming forth with an Appendix professing to treat expressly of *Church-power, and in whom lodged*, but who, with all this parade, cannot be induced to say, who it is he means by these pastors and governors, to whom under peril of everlasting damnation, we are bound to submit.

I observe you rank yourself with the learned, and claim precedence among them. "I, and another learned gentleman."* (*Ego, & Rex meus.*) But will not the learned disclaim you, and treat your lucubrations as an egregious impertinence who can thus double and evade, and meanly refuse to speak to the one single point on which they must all see the whole controversy turns? Must not all your pretended charity and lamentation over our straying souls appear in a high degree ridiculous, and perfect grimace? Dissenters dangerously sin in rejecting a power ordained by Almighty God. They profess themselves ready to yield submission, if shewn where it is. Mr. White, their pretended friend, knows the grand secret; but no prayers can wrest it from him: he is close and demure, and leaves them to wander on, and sin, and perish, in the dark.

But to examine your romantic scheme as far as conjecture can develop it. The Church's pastors and governors *are alone possessed*, you say, *of this power*. By its governors, it is presumed, you mean its bishops; and, by pastors, its priests. Every parish-priest then, (your good self, Sir, among the rest,) and every bishop of this land is vested with this high power, viz. a power of *decreeing other rites and ceremonies* in divine worship, and of *enjoining other terms of Christian communion*, than either Christ or his apostles decreed or enjoined, and of *pronouncing authoritatively in controversies*

* Appendix, page 37.

of faith. This, you will note carefully, is the power in dispute between us : this the power which your Church exerts : this the power you claim for her : and which you affirm is vested solely (if I understand your scheme) in its bishops and priests.

But, pray, give me leave to ask, How do they possess it? —separately or conjunctly? It must be one of these. Has every parish-priest within his parish, and every bishop within his diocese, a right to exercise this power separately and apart from others? Or, must they assemble in common council, and, by joint suffrage and consent, issue forth their determinations, to which the consciences of all the faithful are bound to submit? Not separately and apart, it is presumed you will say, but in convocation convened.

Accordingly, you lay, I observe, a mighty stress upon the convocation's consent to the Act of Uniformity and the present established forms ; and seem to represent this as that which alone gave authority to both ; and that, as long as this consent of the convocation was withheld, (as for a considerable time it was,) so long the reformation
 “ was a measure not quite canonical nor ecclesiastically right :—That it was a going a little awry
 “ into some illegal, or extra-legal, ways :—that
 “ the king's supremacy, on that occasion, was
 “ raised to an undue height, and such as ought
 “ not to be drawn into example at other times :—
 “ that most, if not all, the reviews and alterations
 “ which have been since made, have been made
 “ by the bishops and clergy in, or by the authority
 “ or with the concurrence of, the convocation,
 “ (your great mistake here you will presently
 “ see,) and, if our governors shall at any time
 “ think fit to subject it to any other alterations or
 “ reviews, you will not suffer yourself to doubt
 “ but they will be made, by ecclesiastical, and
 “ synodal, authority, before the civil sanction be
 “ added to them.”*

* Appendix, pages 8, 9.

The authority of the convocation is, I see, the phantom that haunts your mind, and has strangely confused your thoughts on this subject of Church-power. I will candidly endeavour to enlighten you with regard to this point, which, I have the satisfaction of hoping, I have attempted not without good effect with regard to some others.

Before you had taken upon you, Sir, to write about Church-power, you ought to have known, that, by the constitution and laws of England, the convocation is really no part of its government, no branch of its ruling powers, has no share of its legislative authority at all. To be amply convinced of this, I shall lead you to authorities which you will have neither courage nor ability, however strong your inclination may be, to contest. To some great ones, in the law, you have already been directed,* which you have very wisely not presumed to dispute. Turn your attention, now, to some of your own bishops, the ornament, the supports, the glory, of your Church, who were honoured with the first rank among those pastors and governors with whom alone you declare Church-power is lodged.

A gentleman of your erudition hath, no doubt, heard, at least, of the writings of those venerable names, Burnet, Kennet, Nicholson, Hody, and particularly Wake, your late excellent archbishop, on this subject of the convocation.

A due attention to their learned researches on this point will effectually free your mind of the errors it labours under. From the list of these great persons I shall present you with a few extracts, to set right your misapprehensions as to the real constitution and nature of your Church, with which you seem (excuse my freedom) to be extremely unacquainted.

To root up, and destroy for ever, the dangerous absurdity of two independent powers, (i. e. the power you are claiming for your pastors and governors, independent of the civil magistrate,)

* Examination of the Codex, see note, page 10.

the wisdom of our legislature hath enacted and decreed, " by the statute, 25 Henry VIII. called " the Act of Submission, 1st. That the convoca- " tion should from thenceforth be assembled only " by the king's writ. 2dly. That it should make " no canons, or constitutions, but by virtue of the " king's licence, first given them, so to do. 3dly " That, having agreed on any canons, or consti- " tutions, they should yet neither publish nor ex- " ecute them without the king's confirmation of " them. Nor, 4thly, by his authority, execute " any but with these limitations;—that they be " neither against the king's prerogative, nor " against any other common or statute law; nor, " finally, in any respect, contrary to the cus- " toms of the realm." Vide Wake's Appeal, &c. page 4.

The learned metropolitan farther informs you,* " That Christian princes have a right " (and, from Constantine the Great, down, " through successive ages, have exerted the right) " not only of exercising authority over ecclesiasti- " cal persons, but to interpose in ordering eccle- " siastical affairs:—that, when the civil magistrate " advised with the clergy about calling a synod, " it was not looked upon as a matter of right, but " that he often called synods without such advice: " —and, when the bishops have earnestly desired " a council, and it has been refused by the magi- " strate, they have submitted, and not reckoned " themselves to have a right to meet without his " leave.—When a synod was resolved on, the " prince determined, or allowed, the time and " place of meeting, and what persons should come " to them."—When synods are assembled, he shews " that the civil magistrate has a right to " prescribe the matters on which they are to de- " bate, and also the manner and method of their " proceedings in them; and, if he pleases, to sit " in and preside over them; or, to appoint his " commissioner to do it in his stead. (Thus Lord " Cromwell, a lay person, sat in, and presided

* Wake's Authority of Christian Princes, &c. page 10.

“over, the convocation for the king, Henry VIII.) They cannot dissolve themselves, nor depart from council, but by the king’s licence : —their definitions are no farther obligatory than as ratified and confirmed by civil authority.— That the prince is not obliged to confirm whatever the clergy shall think fit to determine, but has a power of annulling and rejecting what they have done ; to alter or improve, to add or take from it. He denies the inherent authority of the Church to make any synodical authoritative definitions ; or, that the fitting of convocations is any right of the Church. And says, that, as even the king’s licence cannot give the convocation authority to promulge or execute any canons but what are agreeable to the customs and laws of the realm, so he ought to submit them to the examination of his council, *learned in the law*, by them to be advised, whether they are thus agreeable, before he confirms them.”*

So that the convocation, you see, are not so much as the king’s supreme council in ecclesiastical affairs. There are others, who are to judge after them, to sit as a check upon them, to inspect, controul, approve, or reject, the advice they give the king, even his council, *learned in the law*.

The archbishop adds, “That, as the king has power, without a convocation, to make and publish such injunctions as he shall think the necessities of the Church to require, and to command the observance of them, so he may, with the advice and consent of his parliament much more, (i.e. I apprehend he may without much more with, their advice and consent,) make what ecclesiastical laws he shall think fitting for the discipline of the Church ; and may alter, correct, disallow, or confirm, the resolutions of the convocation according to his own liking.”†

And, finally, he gives a list of a great number of alterations, reviews, and reformatations, in ecclesiastical matters, which have been done en-

* Wake’s authority of Christian Princes, &c. page 130.

† Ibid. page, 136.

tirely by select committees, without the advice or consent of a convocation, (through all the several reigns of Henry VIII. Edward VI. Queen Elizabeth, James I. and Charles I.) When the king, having first appointed a certain number of bishops and clergymen, (whether they shall be clergy or laity, or what number of each, is entirely in his choice,) to consider what may be fit to be ordered, then enjoins it by his royal authority. And adds, (directly contrary to what you assert, that, after this manner, viz. by select committees, (and acts of council,) the reformation of the Church of England was in great measure carried on, and its most important affairs transacted.* And, in his Appendix, No. VII. he presents you with a long catalogue of canons, injunctions, new translations of the Bible, articles of religion set forth, explanations made of them, examinations of ceremonies, homilies composed, prayers sent to the archbishop with orders for their public use, visitations of the whole kingdom, with an entire suspension of episcopal jurisdiction, (the visitors were two lay-gentlemen, a civilian and a register, and only one divine. Echard's Hist. Eng. page 300.) new offices of communion, other offices reformed, new catechism drawn up, &c. &c. all done by private commissions; or, otherwise, out of convocation.†

So

* Wake's authority of Christian Princes, &c. page 256. The king, says Fuller, would not intrust the Convocation with a power to meddle with matters of religion, from a just jealousy he had of the ill-affection of the major part thereof; who, under the fair rind of Protestant profession, had the rotten core of Romish superstition. It was, therefore, conceived safer for the king to rely on the ability and fidelity of some select confidants, cordial to the cause of religion, than to adventure the same to be discussed and decided by a suspicious Convocation. Ch. Hist. Book VII. page 421.

† Whether, and in what method, our present governors may think proper to attempt any farther reviews, I presume not to guess; but, perhaps, may be allowed to say, That, whoever knows the real history of English convocations, and observes the narrow and bigoted spirit, the petulant, censorious, uncatholic, and rigid, temper which

has

So that the clergy in convocation have not the least ground to claim it as a right to be consulted in any future reformations or reviews. If the government shall indulge them with leave to assemble, and to give their sentiments on these things, it is to be gratefully received as a matter of grace, not of right, and to be used with due humility and deference to the royal judgement, in which the supreme ecclesiastical wisdom is by our constitution declared, and by all our clergy acknowledged, to reside.

By this time, Sir, you have, I hope, a humbler and a juster sense of the power of a convocation, and perceive it to be no part of our government, and that it has no legislative power, or authority, in these realms.

Your favourite fantastic scheme, then, "of pastors and governors having the **SOLE** power as to Church-matters, and that the civil magistrate **has NONE AT ALL**,"* is really attended, as you must now see, with very dangerous and important consequences, actually subversive of our present happy constitution; wresting from the king and parliament a high branch of their prerogative, impeaching their supreme authority, attempting to set up another legislative power, and casting a severe reflection upon our reformation from Popery, which was effected **ONLY** by the civil magistrate, your boasted pastors and governors struggling vehemently against it. The act of 1 Eliz. chap. II. which constitutes our present ecclesiastical establishment, was passed (Judge Blackstone observes) with the dissent of all the bishops; (Gibson's Codex, 268;) and, therefore, the style of lords spiritual is omitted throughout the whole.†

The times of Henry VIII. Edward VI. and Queen Elizabeth, you say, were extraordinary

has ever generally prevailed there, especially in its inferior members, will indulge but faint hopes of reformation from that quarter.

* I. Defence, pages 18, 19.

† Blackstone's Commentaries, 8th Edit. Book I. Chap. II. page 156, note.

times,

times, and the regal supremacy was then raised to an undue height. But, see how the case stood when the Church was in the zenith of its prosperity and power ! ~I mean at the passing the Act of Uniformity of Charles II. in the preamble of which you have the sentiments of the legislature, and those of your most religious king. It recites to this effect: " That, the Book of Common Prayer, &c. having been enjoined to be used by the statute 1st Eliz. and since that, by the neglect of ministers, great inconveniences and schism having happened, for prevention thereof, and for settling the peace of the Church, &c. the king had granted his commission to some bishops, and other divines, to review the Common Prayer-book, and to prepare such alteration and advice as they thought fit to offer. And that, afterward, his majesty, having called a convocation, and having been pleased to authorise and require them to review the same book, and make such alterations as to them should seem meet, and to exhibit and present the same to his majesty for his farther allowance or confirmation ; and, the same having been done, his majesty hath duly considered, and fully approved and allowed, the same, and recommended to this present parliament that the same shall be appointed to be used in all Churches, whereupon it is enacted, &c."

Behold how poor a figure the power of your convocation makes when shining in its highest glory ! The clergy are authorised and required by the king to propose alterations, in Church-ceremonies and forms, for his consideration and allowance as supreme head of the Church. The king approves and allows such of them as he thinks fit ; but, in order to their having power at all to oblige the members of the Church, the king recommends them to his parliament ; and, if they are approved of and passed, they thence acquire the force of a law. What, I pray you, did the clergy in all this affair besides giving their advice ? which might have been taken or refused. So lawyers, though they

they may have no seat in parliament, are often consulted in forming and making laws: shall they, therefore, set up for a share in the legislative power, and exalt themselves from subjects to be rulers in the state?

And, when a most happy alteration was afterwards made in this law by the Act of Toleration, which so deeply affected the forms and ceremonies of the Church, with regard to a great number of the subjects of this kingdom, pray tell me, what hand had the convocation and clergy in that important Church-affair?

And, as forms of worship, so matters of faith are enacted into laws, judged, and punished, entirely by the civil magistrate, without any intervention, or assistance, of the clergy. By the statute of 9th and 10th of William III. it is enacted, That, if any person shall be convicted in the courts of Westminster, or at the assizes, of denying any one of the persons of the Trinity to be God: or, of maintaining that there are more Gods than one: or, of denying the Christian religion, or the authority of the Scriptures, he shall forfeit, be imprisoned, &c. Here, again, you see that the jurisdiction and decision of the great articles of faith are declared by parliament to be not in the convocation, but in the civil courts of law.

As to the punishment of vice and irreligion, the statutes against drunkenness, cursing, swearing, the breach of the sabbath, &c. sufficiently shew that the parliament and common-law courts have taken to themselves the cognizance of these. What, then, becomes of your ecclesiastical dominion and canonical settlement for above two hundred years, when it has been, and might, in innumerable other instances be shewn, that the king and parliament have all along claimed and exerted a supreme right in matters of religion, faith, worship, and practice? Your ecclesiastical courts, indeed, are sometimes permitted to take cognizance of some of these matters, but then it is to be remembered,
 1. That these are the king's courts, to be held only in his name. 2. The judges in these courts
 often

often are, always may, and (as many of your most learned clergy say) ought ever to be, laymen. And, 3, the king, whenever he pleases, stays their proceedings, grants prohibitions, takes causes out of them, and removes them into his courts of common law. Such is the original radical jurisdiction which you claim for your pastors and governors!

But, to return to the convocation. Our excellent constitution, you see, hath with great sagacity circumscribed its power, and reduced it to a mere shadow, to just nothing at all. Sad experience hath shewn that ecclesiastical synods, from the famous council of Nice, down to the not-famous convocation of London, anno 1717, have been little else than the pests and troublers of mankind, mints where pernicious errors have received the stamp of authority, and been sent out to corrupt the Church; and that for the most part, they have been conventions of interested, ambitious, factious, and angry, men; who, under a fair pretence of *zeal for the Lord of Hosts*, have frequently set the world in flames by driving furiously and foully on in pursuit of their own worldly views, and, with an affectation of being thought *contending earnestly for the faith*, have been only contending who should be *greatest among themselves*. This our legislature knew to have been the manner, the practice immemorial, of ecclesiastical synods, and therefore guarded, with great discretion, against the portentous evil, denied them all legislative power, subjected them entirely to the authority of the civil magistrate, and thus, with no small difficulty, has restrained them from throwing, as they have often done, the world into confusion, and from filling the Church with everlasting debates.

And now, Sir, having thus attempted your edification, in a point of high importance, where, it is certain, you greatly needed it, by this time you must begin to see not the futility only, but the presumption and the real danger, of your scheme. — That it is a suggestion as groundless as it is ungrateful and ill-timed, “ that our reformation was

“ not

“not effected in a right and legal manner.” You must see, that, by representing the magistrate as having no power in the Church, you undermine your glorious structure, and betray it into popish hands; by your laying, therefore, so essential a stress upon the assent of the convocation to the Act of Uniformity, by which the reformation and the present Church were established, you supply the crafty Jesuit with unanswerable arguments for destroying that foundation upon which both are built. For, pray, (the Jesuit will ask,) how was that assent of the convocation obtained? Was it not by the magistrates depriving the holy bishops, and by thrusting out the Church’s pastors from those seats, and from that authority, which God had given them therein! And can the assent of a convocation, thus packed by the magistrate, make that legal, canonical, and ecclesiastically right, which was before illegal, uncanonical, and ecclesiastically wrong?

Besides, when you talk of the convocation’s assent and concurrence, you adopt language altogether unconstitutional: these are terms much too assuming and presumptuous. Submission, Sir, and obedience, is all that the convocation was capable of giving. The king may give his assent, and either house of parliament may give their assent, and thereby confirm and give authority to any act: but, should the magistrates of a country-town talk of *farther confirming it by their concurrence and assent*, which would they most provoke, your indignation or your mirth? And yet the corporation of a Cornish borough, Sir, has as much right by our constitution, to talk of ratifying, by their assent, any law of the land, as the convocation itself.*

And hence, by the way, you see the extreme

* The Convocation never gave their assent at all to the articles of religion in King Edward’s reformation. And all the assent they ever gave to Queen Elizabeth’s (as far as I can find) was the setting forth the articles, which was not done till January, 1563; whereas, the reformation was established by the first of Eliz. January 1558. Vide Fuller’s Ch. Hist. Book IX. pages 52 and 72.

vanity of your imagination,—“ That the civil magistrate, by ratifying the XXth article, hath recognised and owned the power to be not in himself but in the Church:”* i. e. as you are pleased to understand it, in the clergy. By what logic, Sir, do you make the Church, in that article to mean the clergy? Are not the laity also an essential part of the Church? Does not the very preceding article, the XIXth, expressly declare that they are, defining the Church, *to be a congregation of faithful men*? But, would you impute to the magistrate so tame, so absurd, so ridiculous, a part, as publicly to disown himself to have any power in Church-matters; yea, to deny himself to belong to the *congregation of the faithful*? Yes, with astonishment be it seen, this is what you are not ashamed openly to impute to him. “ For, the king and parliament (you say) have plainly disowned any such power as we are speaking of in themselves, and recognised it to be in the Church; and nobody imagines, that, by the Church, they mean themselves.”†—But, if, by declaring it to be in the Church, they have disowned it to be in themselves, they have thereby also, disowned themselves to be of *the congregation of the faithful*; for, *this congregation* they declare to be *the Church*, to whom this power belongs. Besides, this is supposing the king to disown and give up a power which the whole legislature hath solemnly vested in him, and which every bishop and ecclesiastic in the kingdom (till the time of King William) did swear, that he believed in his conscience to be true, under the penalty of a premunire, viz. “ That the king is the only supreme governor of this realm as well in all spiritual, or ecclesiastical, things, or causes, as temporal; and they will assist and defend him in such jurisdiction and authority.”

See, now, the hopeful state to which you have brought the civil magistrate! You have made him

* I. Defence, page 17. Appen. page 5.

† I. Defence, page 17.

to divest himself of all power as to Church-matters, and to recognise it to be in you, the clergy. He is now, therefore, in all these affairs, to be subject to you his *higher powers*. You have authority from God to make laws, and to prescribe rites, which kings and parliaments are to obey; *to bind your kings in chains*, spiritual, ecclesiastic, chains.

—Rise up, O ye kings, to these your pastors and governors! be instructed, and pay homage to their spiritual decrees! This doctrine was the happy engine which hath often lifted humble bishops to the high places of the earth, and hath made kings and emperors bow down, with abject submission, at their feet!

Ecclesiastical affairs, Sir, you are too sagacious not to know, take in a mighty compass, and very naturally comprehend the principles, the manners, the whole social and moral conduct, of those over whom these holy pastors are to watch. Thus the priests of the Church have exalted themselves for many ages, to be princes of the world; and, by claims of spiritual power, have artfully possessed themselves of enormous shares of temporal grandeur and wealth. But, is this a proper time, think you, to revive and to press pretensions of this kind? Thank heaven, that darkness is passed! The light of Christian liberty dawns gloriously upon us, and exposes all such fanatic claims to just scorn and reproach.

But—I press you no farther. You begin to relent. Having urged you with the weight of your XXXIVth article, which you have frequently subscribed, and of your XXXth canon, to which you have solemnly sworn, both which declare positively *your Church-ceremonies to be ordained by the authority of the civil magistrate*, you are, at length, constrained to own their force; but without the honour of retracting your former dangerous assertion, “that the magistrate has no such power at all.”* You are now brought to acknowledge—“That the truth of the case is, all

* I. Defence, pages 18, 19.

“ our ceremonies and forms of worship are ordained, as they ought to be, both by ecclesiastical and civil authority.”* Honestly said at last! Well, if by civil authority, the magistrate has some power in ordering Church-matters, which you have all along denied him, it then follows that the power is not vested solely in the pastors and governors, as with great pertinacity you have insisted it was. *Render then to Caesar the things which are Caesar's*, and lift not up your heel against the hand by whose bounty you are so liberally fed.

You are at last willing, I find, to compromise the matter, and to go shares with the magistrate in the enjoyment of this power; and presume to talk of an “ Alliance, and of terms on which it stands between the State and the Church.”† This alliance, Sir, is a mere phantom, conjured up by the strength of a late warm imagination, to preserve at least a shadow of its lost power to the Church.‡ Neither our history nor our laws know any thing at all of it. The nature of our constitution entirely disowns it; and avows the Church to be not an ALLY, but a SUBJECT, to the state. An alliance supposes independency in the contracting powers. But, by the famous Act of Submission, the Church hath resigned all pretensions to independency, and given up its powers into the hands of the state. The truth of the case is this. A few centuries past, the Church was found guilty of a dangerous rebellion and high-treason against the state. Whilst it lay thus at mercy, as a criminal before its judge, its pardon and life were given it upon the terms of its resigning all claims of independency, and submitting itself thenceforward to the will of the prince. But, behold, these terms of submission you have now, it seems, refined into terms of alliance; and the Church, from a pardoned criminal, now claims to be a rival power

* Appendix page 13.

† Ibid.

‡ See the Rev. Caleb Fleming's excellent Comment on Warburton's Alliance, &c.

and to have its rights and jurisdiction independent of the state! "Our ceremonies and forms of worship are ordained by ecclesiastical, as well as civil, authority." But these, alas! are but illusions which mock your heated fancy; for, ecclesiastical authority, as distinguished from civil, you may rest assured, there is none. Ask your learned bishops, and they will utterly disclaim it. Ask your able lawyers, and they will tell you, that you incur the danger of a premunire by presuming to exert any one single act of authority of this kind. Ask all the knowing members of the convocation itself, and they will answer with one voice, "It is not in us.—Authority we have none." Yea, ask the meanest novice in the history of the reformation, and of the establishment of your Church, and he will presently acquaint you, that your ceremonies and forms were not ordained by BOTH ecclesiastical and civil authority, but by civil authority ONLY, the ecclesiastics in convocation and in the two universities obstinately refusing to give their concurrence and even entering their very solemn and zealous protest against it.

But you still insist upon it, as if it were of some weight, that the convocation at last gave their assent. Pray! how did they give it? Not till they had been first garbled and packed by the magistrate; all the bishops, save one, exiled, imprisoned, turned out, by his authority; and new ones, according to his taste, put into their room: besides this, the invincible artillery of deaneries, prebends, snug and fat livings, played strongly upon the inferior clergy, who hoped that by their submission they might the more readily succeed those dignitaries who had been deprived by the civil power. And, is it strange that the convocation, thus powerfully attacked, made no long resistance, but yielded, however reluctant, to what parliament had done? But their concurrence,
I must

* Hear what even Echard, who was never suspected of partiality against the Church, says, "Fourteen bishops twelve deans, twelve archdeacons, fifteen heads of colleges, fifty prebendaries, and eighty rectors, were deprived."

I must again tell you, whether free or forced, gave, and could give, no authority to the new establishment; because, by our constitution, they had not the smallest degree of authority to give. Suppose the convocation had refused their concurrence to that act of the legislature, would the law not have had its force? You dare not affirm it. Suppose, again, the clergy had established any new forms without an act of parliament, would the people have been obliged to yield obedience to them? Neither durst you assert this.

However, not to discourage good beginnings, I will take you where you are. We are come, then, to this issue: that the civil magistrate has power to ordain ceremonies and rites of worship, and to make new terms of Christian communion; and that the things of this kind, which are done in the Church of England, are done, at least in part, by civil authority. This is what you now grant. But the question then returns, with unanswerable weight upon you,—Who gave him this power? What charter has lodged it in him? Not, surely, the Scriptures, the only charter of the Christian Church. For, all the power, or authority, which the Scriptures give the magistrate, relates only, and can relate only, to things of a civil nature, but cannot at all relate to things of worship and religion. This never can be contested, because the magistrate, at the time when the Scriptures were written, and for near three hundred years after, was Infidel or Pagan. St. Paul, therefore, by commanding us *to be subject to the higher powers, and to obey magistrates, for conscience-sake, because they are the ministers of God, for good*, does not, in the least, require our obedience to their decrees as to ceremonies

“prived by the QUEEN. But it was strongly believed, that of the rest, the greatest part complied *against their consciences*, and would have been ready for another turn if the Queen had died while that race of *Incumbents* lived, and the next successor had been of *another religion*.”

Eschard's Hist. Eng. page 330.

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and forms of worship ; or, our conformity to their establishments in things of a religious nature. No : St. Paul himself was a zealous nonconformist. He was accused of the heinous sin of schism by that great champion of the Pagan Ephesian Church, Demetrius, the shrine-maker to the goddess Diana ; and, so far was this great apostle from submitting *himself to every ordinance of man*,* that he was publicly charged with having *not only at Ephesus, but almost throughout all Asia, persuaded and turned away much people*, (from the then established religion,) *saying, that they be no gods which are made with hands.*† And, when certain of the philosophers of the Epicureans and of the Stoics encountered him at Athens, and brought him unto Areopagus, that they might know what that new doctrine was whereof he spoke, he entered on his subject with a spirited unqualified protest against the established religion of the state.

Ye men of Athens, I perceive that in all things ye are too superstitious. So that, though St. Paul knew that the powers that be, are ordained of God,‡ he also knew that these powers were confined to those civil purposes for which society was instituted, that the magistrate was to execute wrath upon him that doeth evil : and, therefore, so far was St. Paul from extending this authority of the *powers that be*, over the rights of conscience and private judgement, that he made it the grand scope of his labours, as did all the other apostles, by their preaching, and their lives, to persuade and draw men off from the established forms of worship, and to convince them, that, in these affairs, there was one King only, and one Lord, to whom their homage alone was due,—even JESUS, who, by his sufferings, had merited this high honour, and to whom alone God had commanded that, in things of religion, *every knee shall bow*.

Here, then, I again call upon and provoke you to tell me,—Who gave the civil magistrate this au-

* 1 Peter ii. 13. † Acts xix. 26. ‡ Romans xiii. 3.

thority

thority in religious matters? You are silent, and cannot say.—Well, then, if he hath none by the command of Almighty God, and by the original constitution of the Christian Church, consequently the subjects of Jesus Christ are under no obligation to obey his injunctions in things of a religious nature; they are guilty of no fault in dissenting from established forms; your censures of them, therefore, as great sinners for so doing, are extremely rash and uncharitable, for which it becomes you to be humbled greatly before God, and to ask pardon of men.

See, now, the unhappy dilemma to which you are reduced. If you say the magistrate has authority to decree ceremonies and forms of worship, to make new terms of communion, and to determine controversies of faith, you then sin against the undoubted rights and constitution of the Christian Church, against God, against Jesus Christ, against reason and common sense. But, if you say that he has not, you then sin against the Church of England, against its laws and constitution. You are a Dissenter, at least, in principle; but, perhaps, have not fortitude enough to sacrifice what you call your *snugness*, by openly professing your dissent.

Having thus considered the former part of your self-repugnant scheme, 1. That the magistrate has not,—And, 2. That he has, the authority which he claims and exercises in your Church: I should now proceed to the other, viz. *That it is lodged in the Church's pastors and governors.* But, here, to the surprise of every attentive reader, you content yourself with asserting, without paying them the compliment of so much as attempting to prove that they are possessed of this power. The Bible I thought you knew to be the religion of Protestants, and the Scriptures the only rule of their practice and faith. But, behold! a Protestant, a divine, claiming a high power for his pastors and governors, a power in which the peace and purity of the Christian Church are essentially concerned, and yet not able.

able, nor when called upon even pretending, to produce one single text of Scripture in support of this claim.

I have pointed out to you several express commands of the sacred law, which directly forbid and condemn this pretended power,—have shewn you, that Christians are the Lord's freed men; that they are, each for himself, *to study and search the Scriptures,—to examine and try the spirits,—to call no man upon earth master*, and are *not to be called RABBI*, i. e. are neither to acknowledge, nor to claim, any authority over others in matters of religion, *because one only is our Lawgiver and Master in these things, even Christ*; and, all Christians are brethren: that though the *princes of the Gentiles exercise dominion over them, and they who are great exercise authority upon them*, it SHALL NOT BE SO AMONGST YOU.—What have you replied, Sir to these plain and direct commands? Have you so much as attempted to evade their force? No: but with conscious impotence stand still, and see this Scripture-artillery demolishing the boasted thrones of your pastors and governors, and beating down the high places to which your imagination had raised them, without so much as extending a feeble hand for their support.

From what has been said on the point of Church-power, you see how little reason you have to arrogate to yourself, and your brethren of the establishment, the honour of being the only champions that are able to encounter the Church of Rome. Little reason, indeed, have you to boast, as you do in your Appendix, that, “Upon the head of “*Herefy, Schism, Ordination, Tradition, Church-unity, and Catholic-communion*, no Protestant “*is so well qualified to write upon these, and so “likely to do it to the conviction of a Papist, as “one of the Church of England; but, to be sure, “not a Protestant Dissenter.*”* What Protestant Dissenters can do on the popish controversy, the

* Appendix, page 11.

Salters-hall lectures will shew, to their lasting honour. And, in truth, all your mighty champions, Chillingworth, Hales, Stillingfleet, Middleton, &c. in all their conflicts with the Church of Rome, have been ever forced to quit their own, and to borrow our, weapons; and to these alone have owed the triumphs they have gained.

No Protestant can safely meet a sagacious and learned Jesuit if his principles oblige him to maintain the authority of Councils, Fathers, and the Church's power to decree rites, and authority in controversies of faith. It is the sufficiency of Scripture, the right of private judgement, (our distinguishing principles as Dissenters,) which supply us with such arguments as no advocate for the Romish system can ever successfully oppose. These, Sir, you must admit, have been the principles upon which your own learned doctors have defended the reformation, and the principles on which alone it is capable of defence. But, then, you are to remember also, that they are principles on which the Church of England can never possibly be defended; and which, if faithfully and duly followed, would have brought Chillingworth, and Hales, and Middleton, among us; and would make every intelligent and honest Protestant in this kingdom a Dissenter from the established Church.

For, if the Scripture be, indeed, a sufficient and perfect rule, what become of your additional splendors (as you are pleased to call them) and of your improvements upon Christianity! What of your Church's power to decree ceremonies and rites! What of sponsors and the cross in baptism, kneeling at the Lord's supper, bowing to the East, &c. of which the Scriptures, the sufficient and perfect rule, say not a word! And, if the right and the duty of private judgment be acknowledged, what becomes of the Church's boasted authority in controversies of faith! It is instantly annihilated. Your learned Doctors themselves must have felt the difficulty of the part which they had to act. And, it is really pleasant to observe, how, in their attacks upon Dissenters, they appeal to the opinions

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of councils and of the Fathers, speak in the most pompous terms of the power and authority of the Church, and pathetically expatiate on the sin and the danger of schism; but no sooner does a crafty Jesuit come forth armed, *cap-a-pie*, with the same weapons, but they immediately change their ground, retreat to our quarters, and avail themselves of our arguments: then the Bible, the Bible ONLY, is the religion of Protestants, and every man is to read and to judge for himself: then not those who separate from a Church that imposes unlawful (unscriptural) terms are guilty of schism, but the Church alone is guilty that imposes such terms.

The slightest attention will shew you, with how extremely ill a grace the divines of the Church of England must appear upon the subject of Schism, Tradition, and of Church-unity. They who, by the *traditions of men*, (sponsors, the cross, &c.) have notoriously made void the *commandment of God*, (to receive one another, but not to doubtful disputations:*)—who break, in a flagrant manner, the unity of the Christian Church, by setting up new terms of fellowship and communion in it, casting out such as Christ receives into it, declaring before the world against catholic communion, by refusing to admit any to the two sacraments of religion, unless they will submit to new rites, which themselves have ordained, as being improvements upon the plan which Jesus Christ and his inspired apostles have left us. Are these the men to encounter Romish emissaries?—Must they not go forth with infinite disadvantage, and feel their own weapons turned violently upon themselves? But the Dissenter, who stands fast to his distinguishing and proper principles, (*sufficiency of Scripture*, and the *right of private judgment*,) at once beats them from the strong holds of Councils and Fathers, (where you have been long assailing, but not able to dislodge, them,) and makes all their learned sophistry fall before the sacred force of the BIBLE and

* Rom. xiv. 1.

COMMON SENSE. And hence is it, as before observed, that the many unhappy profelytes, which these seducers are said to make, are all drawn from your, not ONE, that I ever heard of, from our, Churches : your doctrines and forms too naturally preparing them to take that fatal step.

But it is time that we now quit the subject of Church power. I have treated it more largely, because it enters into the essence, and is, as must be universally acknowledged, the one single point upon which the whole controversy turns. Your other two points, the sacramental test, and the regal supremacy, I shall dismiss in fewer words.

As to the sacramental test, you still maintain, “ that, as the law now stands, the priest has a power of repelling evil livers when they come to receive the sacrament as a qualification for a place.” By this apprehension, you are prevented from seeing the mortifying situation in which you really stand, otherwise you would groan under this disgraceful yoke, the Test-act; and for the honour of Christianity, and ease of your own conscience, would most anxiously wish for its repeal. The lower house of convocation, in the year 1704, saw this difficulty, under which the clergy lay, in the same light as I have represented it. And, though they are to be justly ranked among the most determined champions for the Church, yet they did not deny this to be a grievance, as you have done; but in their address to the upper house, they state, among the *gravamina cleri*, the *grievances of the Clergy to be redressed*,—“ The increasing difficulties of the parochial clergy about administering the holy sacrament indifferently to all persons who demand it, in order to qualify themselves for offices, because they SEE NOT HOW THEY COULD, in several cases, act conformably to the rubric and the canons of the Church in repelling such persons as were unworthy, and particularly, notorious schismatics,” without exposing themselves to

“ vexa-

“vexatious and expensive suits of law.”* This, you see, was the construction which this learned body of the clergy put upon this law, they doubtless had the best legal advice on this subject before they made the above-mentioned mortifying declaration; we may, therefore, safely presume, that, if the eminent lawyers of that time had been clearly of your opinion, “that, as the law now stands, the priest has a power of repelling evil livers,” the clergy would not have stated to the upper house, as a grievance, that they *saw not how they could repel them*: and, if you attentively weigh all the circumstances of this case, you will find that the difficulties respecting this question cannot be satisfactorily removed; for, there are two opposite evils to which the clergy are exposed; both of them cannot be avoided; their only option is to take the least. If they do not comply with the orders of the rubric, to which they are sworn, they destroy the peace of their own consciences. If they do comply with the rubric, and refuse the sacrament to an evil liver, who demands it as a qualification for a place, they expose themselves to vexatious and expensive suits for depriving the subject of some of the most valuable favours of the prince.†

But, to conclude this point; if, as the law now stands, the priest has, as you affirm, a power to repel evil livers, pray what is the reason that the rubric and canons, which so solemnly oblige him

* Tindal’s History of England, Vol. III. page 686.

† This question, whether a clergyman can safely repel an evil liver, as described by the rubric, when he demands the sacrament as a qualification for a post, or place, has been lately very particularly considered, previous to the application which was made to parliament in March, 1787, for the repeal of the Corporation and Test Acts. A case was laid before three gentlemen of distinguished eminence in the law; and, it is apprehended, that their opinions will not only justify the author of these letters in what he has advanced on this subject, but also enable us to see the propriety of that declaration made by the lower house of convocation—“That they saw not how they could, in many cases, act conformably to the rubric, &c. without exposing themselves to expensive and vexatious suits.”—See the statement of the case, and the substance of the answers to it, in the Appendix, No. II.

to it, are not only not faithfully observed, but most shamefully violated, and quite trampled under foot? Whence is it that, among the swarms of notorious evil-livers, heretics, blasphemers, and open unbelievers, who continually come to the Lord's table to qualify for places, we never hear of one rejected by the priest? What! is there no conscience, no integrity, left among those who administer this holy rite of religion? Seeing the rubric requires, and the canons oblige, the clergy to reject these evil livers, and the scandal of receiving them (both to Deists without and to Christians within) is so crying and flagrant, why, in the name of God, whose ministers and stewards you profess yourselves to be, are these enemies to his government, these aliens from his family, these despisers of his Son, never rejected, but ever tamely received, as his children, at his table?—The reason is obvious. The parish-priest feels the difficulty before mentioned as having been stated by the lower house of convocation: he ALSO “SEES NOT how he can repel such persons as are unworthy without exposing himself to vexatious and expensive suits.” And, this being the case, he chooses rather to throw himself upon the mercies of God than be exposed to the indignation of man.

And now, Sir, if, with this dreadful and oppressive yoke upon your neck, whilst scoffing Infidels laugh, and discerning Christians mourn, you are easy and well pleased, and bless yourself and your Church in the protection of this law, all I shall say at present is, that I envy not your felicity, but most devoutly thank God that I have neither lot nor share in this matter. Only hear the word which God sent by his prophet to certain time-serving priests, Ezek. xlv. 6, 7: *Thou shalt say to the rebellious house, let it suffice you of all your abominations, in that you have brought into my sanctuary strangers, uncircumcised in heart, to be in my sanctuary, to pollute it; even my house, when ye offer my bread:—they have broken my covenant because of all your abominations.*

I have

I have said so much on your first topic of Church-power, that I have not either room or occasion to add many things on your last,—our Constitution in Church and State. Here, indeed, I observe with pleasure, that, amidst the pompous professions you affect to make of confuting my account of the regal supremacy and of our constitution, you hardly, in one single instance, presume to contradict it. My account, Sir, was founded upon fact and upon law. After close examination, I suppose you found it to be so; and, therefore, though, to save appearances, you would seem to say something on this subject, yet, in your whole fourteen pages, there is scarcely the show of any opposition to what I had advanced; but, on the contrary, in one instance, a remarkable confirmation of the most material part of my argument: for, though, in page 13 of your Appendix, you charge me “with false play in citing your “XXXIVth article, as *declaring expressly that “your Church-ceremonies were ordained by the “civil magistrate: and ask me, Did you find there “any such words?”* yet, with agreeable surprize, I find you were either so incautious, or so honest as, within a few lines, to cite the very words of the article, which support, in the strongest manner, the sense I had given; where *an open and wilful violation of these ceremonies is, by the article, declared to be a hurting the authority of the civil magistrate.* Can a violation of these ceremonies violate the magistrate’s authority, if, by his authority, they had not been ordained?

As for the form of speaking in use among us, *our Constitution in Church and State*, that it is really an impropriety, as generally understood, I do not at all hesitate (with due submission to the great authorities by whom it is used) again to insist. It is a form of speaking, no doubt, drawn from the usage of popish times, before the reformation of our religion took place. For then, truly, there was a constitution in Church, distinct from, and independent of, our constitution in State. The Church had then its laws, its right,

its officers, and powers, and its sovereign, or supreme, head, peculiar to itself, and apart from the state. But, by the reformation, all that independency and distinction is abolished: it is now become entirely and absolutely a civil system. There are no laws in the Church (I mean none of human enactment) but what were made by the civil magistrate, and receive all their obligations and authority from him: nor are there any officers in the Church but what are constituted by the authority and direction of the magistrate, and are all liable to be unmade and deprived again by him. But, that our constitution in Church is really nothing but a civil, or parliamentary, constitution has, with incontestible evidence, been shewn in the preceding letters; and is, indeed, a truth so plain, that no intelligent, or sober, member of your Church will, I apprehend, so much as attempt to deny it.

Our constitution, therefore, having been changed by the happy reformation, this form of speaking ought, in strict propriety, to have been also altered; for, to talk of *our Constitution in Church and State* is not only putting the effect before the cause, but it is conveying an idea which your authorities could not possibly intend to convey, because not founded in truth, viz.—That the Church has a constitution distinct from, independent of, yea, prior, or superior, to, our constitution in state. However, to abate somewhat of your attachment to this principle, even if you could establish it, I must remind you, that the Presbyterian Church of Scotland is as essential, fundamental, and unalterable, a part of our present ecclesiastical constitution as the episcopal Church of England can ever pretend to be.

My account of the power which our laws and constitution give to the kings and queens of this realm, in affairs ecclesiastical, to instruct, overrule, direct, controul, all the archbishops, bishops, and priests, of this kingdom, in all their sacerdotal and most spiritual concerns, &c. you do not pretend to controvert, but rather attempt to vindicate
and

and explain it. But you unhappily forget the one grand and material point for which it was introduced, and to which, above all other, it concerned you to speak; and that is, to reconcile this constitution of the Church of England with the constitution of the Church of Christ, and, to shew that Dissenters cannot separate from the one without the danger and the high crime of separating themselves from the other. This was the point which you asserted, and on which you so copiously flourished; but you are now, I presume, too well instructed to persevere in endeavouring to support it. You must now see them, Sir, to be two distinct and quite different societies: and will be henceforward eased of those painful commiserations, over the souls of your dissenting brethren, with which your generous mind has laboured, and be no longer terrified, on account of our schism, with those direful apprehensions, concerning our salvation.

There are some other passages in your Appendix on which I must make a few observations. I am pleased to see that you again venture to bring forward the affair of Mr. Whiston.* I thought you would gladly have suffered it to sleep. The case, to be sure, wrung much. You have been once and again flinging to rid yourself of it; but the manner in which you now do it rather more sorely wounds than gives you relief. "You tax me with misrepresentation, and with no mean talent that way."† Yea, have the courage to confront me with a citation from Bishop Burnet, to whom I had referred as supporting my account. But, what will the world say, Sir! How will all your friends, if not your own heart, reproach you! and the learned, among whom you rank, hold you in great derision! when they see you undertaking to give the public an account of his lordship's history of that case; but, either carelessly overlooking, or wilfully suppressing, the material and im-

* Stated in Letter I. † Appendix, page 39.

portant passages which clearly and irrefragably support my account.

“His lordship (say you) * reports it thus: “That, it seeming doubtful whether the convocation could, in the first instance, proceed against a man for heresy; and, it being certain that their proceedings, if not warranted by law, might involve them in a premunire; the upper house, in an address, prayed the queen *to ask the opinion of the judges, and such others as she thought fit, concerning these doubts, that they might know how the law stood in this matter.*” Here you stop short with the bishop’s narration, having either not patience to read, or not honestly to write farther; and then, with a flourish, ask,—“Will these accounts now authorise you to represent, as you do, the two houses of convocation as waiting upon her majesty, and that too to be instructed by her, and to learn her judgement; and not that, neither, how the law stood in relation to their proceedings, but how the gospel stood in relation to the opinions of Mr. Whiston and the mystery of the Trinity? And do you not now perceive your misrepresentation of the case, and that I did not *talk without book* when I spake of it as a specimen of your talent, which, indeed, is not mean in that way?”

There is one thing I here perceive, Sir, which is, that, if you do not *talk without book*, yet, when *the book is before you*, you either want capacity or integrity to make a proper use of it. For, besides the partial and maimed account which you have given of this matter, his lordship expressly adds the *important passages* which follow; whence the public will please to observe with how little fairness and truth you treat this famous case, and how great is both the Church’s and my own infelicity; she in having an advocate, and I an opponent, capable of such low and dishonourable methods of defence.

His lordship says, “That, by the act of 1st of Elizabeth, which defined what should be judged

* Appendix, page 38.

“heresy,

“heresy, *that judgement* was declared to be in the crown. The bishops, in convocation, drew out several propositions, from Whiston’s books, which seemed plainly to be reviving of Arianism, and censured them as such. The lower house (excepting to one proposition) censured them in the same manner. This the archbishop, being then disabled by the gout, sent by one of the bishops to the queen, for her assent; (page 1194, *Approbation*;) who promised to CONSIDER OF IT. At their (the convocation’s) meeting next winter, no answer being come from the queen, two bishops were sent to ASK it, and to receive her majesty’s pleasure in it; but she could not tell what was become of the paper the archbishop had sent her. So an extract of the censure was again sent to her; but she THOUGHT NOT FIT to send any answer to it. So Whiston’s affair slept, and all farther proceedings against him were stopped, since the queen did NOT CONFIRM the step that we had made, though he afterward published a large work in four volumes octavo.”*

Here let it be noted, 1. The judgement of what is, or is not, to be treated as heresy is, by our (*truly apostolic*) constitution, lodged wholly in the crown. The QUEEN, when such wears it, is the proper, the sole, judge what doctrines and books shall be censured as heretical,—what principles and tenets are, or are not, contrary to the holy orthodox faith.

Note 2. The two houses, having extracted several passages from Mr. Whiston’s books, and censured them as heretical,† deputed first one bishop, then two, to wait upon the queen, to ask her approba-

* Burnet’s History of his Times, Vol. VI. pages 1133, 34, 35, 94. Edit. 12mo.

† The archbishops and bishops, in their address to the queen, say, *That Mr. Whiston had advanced several damnable and blasphemous assertions against the doctrine and worship of the ever blessed Trinity: and, in their censure, they earnestly beseech all Christian people, by the mercies of Christ, to take heed how they give ear to these false doctrines, as they tender the honour and glory of our Saviour, &c.*

tion and consent, to receive her majesty's pleasure in this affair, and to desire her confirmation, without which their censure was not of the least signification, or validity, in the Church.

3. Upon the receipt of this request, the queen, as sole judge, promised to CONSIDER OF IT. The affair was of great importance, viz. "What the primitive apostolic doctrine was concerning the Trinity, Incarnation, Nature and Generation of the *Logos*? Whether there were three persons existing in one undivided substance; or whether the *Logos* was distinct in essence from the Father, not created, nor made, but in an ineffable manner begotten from eternity? And, finally, whether the apostolical constitutions were a genuine and inspired book, and a true part of the sacred canon?" Her Majesty was now applied to, by her two houses of convocation, and requested, as sole judge, to pronounce authoritatively upon these points, i.e. to tell them whether Mr. Whiston's Doctrine was to be received or rejected, to be considered as heresy or not, in this Church. The queen as became a wise judge, refused to pronounce rashly. She took time to *consider of it*, to weigh sedately in her mind the merits of the cause, lest she should condemn the innocent.

Note, The Scriptures, and the four first general councils, are the measure set by law to judge of heresy. Her majesty, therefore, being now requested by her clergy to judge authoritatively in this important case, acted a worthy part in deferring her judgement till she had examined carefully the rule by which she was to judge.

Observe, 4. After the queen had taken time maturely to consider of these deep and mysterious points, she *thought not fit to send any answer*. Upon her majesty's thoughts the issue of this great affair is seen absolutely to depend.

Finally, 5. It is worthy to be observed, that her majesty's *thoughts*, and *judgment*, on this weighty case, were quite different from those of her learned bishops and clergy. They thought Mr. Whiston's writings

writings “ contained damnable and wicked doctrines, and earnestly beseech all Christian people, by the mercies of Christ, to take heed how “ they give ear, &c.”—and judged them to deserve a public and solemn censure: her majesty thought otherwise. She did *not think fit* to pass this public and solemn censure on them by confirming the step the convocation had taken. In consequence of which their proceedings were all stopped, and the solemn censure they had passed with all their earnest obtestations, *by the mercies of Christ* evaporate into air. This is a fair and true state of the case. What improvements are here made, by the wisdom of later ages, in the primitive apostolic plan! Behold the WOMAN now empowered not only to teach, but to usurp authority over, the man; over all the archbishops, bishops, and priests, of this realm; to vacate their most solemn censures, to quash and stop at once their spiritual proceedings, in an affair where blasphemous doctrines and damnable and wicked errors were bringing danger of everlasting ruin to the souls over whom they watched! See here, Sir, the two scales that are to try doctrines and opinions in your holy apostolic Church. In one is laid the united judgment of all the bishops and clergy in convocation convened; in the other, the queen’s alone:—lo, the former mounts, and kicks the beam! The single judgment of the queen, in the balance of the Church, weighs more than that of all the learned bishops and priests of the realm!*

* See a series of such exertions of feminine-archiepiscopal pastoral, authority, throughout the whole reign of Queen Elizabeth; particularly the case of Archbishop Grindal, whom she sequestered, in great wrath, from his archiepiscopal functions, for refusing to obey a rash and tyrannical order of the queen relating to Church-matters. Under this sequestration he continued many years. The two houses of convocation presented to the queen a most humble and earnest petition for his restoration, but could not obtain it. Vide Fuller’s Church Hist. Book IX. page 120. —Neal’s Hist. Pur. Vol. I. pages 358, 374.

And

And is not this exactly consonant to the account I had given? “Is not here, Sir, the very comely and edifying sight (at which you except)* of the two houses of convocation waiting upon the good queen, to be instructed by her majesty whether that gentleman’s books, concerning the Trinity, were to be condemned as heretical or not? Do they tell us, (you ask) of the synod laying their censure before the queen, to have her judgement upon it?” Yes. “And of their waiting upon a woman, to learn, from her mouth what the Church is to believe, and what to reject, as to this great mystery of faith?” You must see and feel that this really is the case: and you must permit me to wonder that you, Sir, who, as a dutiful son of the Church, ought to have drawn a veil over every thing which can reflect no honour upon it, should, by a rash and indiscreet defence, so much injure the cause which you wish to support.

As your Letters and Defences breathe a noble compassion for the straying souls of Dissenters, the extraordinary instance, with which you conclude the whole, ought not to be overlooked. You are concerned, it seems, “That I have read, and in several instances agree in sentiment and reasoning—with, the author of the Rights of the Christian Church, and appear to have much studied and profited by that worthy author;—and are sorry to find dissenting ministers and gentlemen dealing so much in books of this sort. So long as this is the case, what hope of a comprehension! Or, indeed who would wish for it!”† I have read, Sir, and I hope profited by, the Rights, &c. as you profess to have read, and I hope not without profit, Bellarmine, an author incomparably worse. As for my agreement with the author of the Rights, &c. as far as he agrees with truth, with Scripture and with law, you must give me leave to say, (without augmenting, I hope, your sorrow)

* Appendix, page 37.

† Ib. d. pages 41, 44.

that

that I esteem it, not the least reproach: nay, for once, Sir, if you please, I will make you my confessor, and frankly own, that, in many things, I agree in sentiment and reasoning with those who are far worse than either Bellarmin or the author of the Rights, &c. for, I believe in one God, notwithstanding St. James says the devils are of the same opinion.*

Dissenting ministers, and all gentlemen who are sincere enquirers after truth, deal, I presume, in books of all sorts, whence they can gather useful knowledge, and improve and enlarge their minds. They have dealt in the writings of the shrewdest Deists, as you see by the many noble defences of Christianity which their pens have produced. Your affectation, of a pious censure on our *dealing in books of this sort*, is a bugbear, which may frighten children in understanding; but Dissenters, you should have known, *have not so learned Christ*. They are commanded to *try the spirits, to examine and prove all things*; and remember the noble Bereans, who are commended by St. Paul for searching carefully into *the grounds and evidences of things* before they gave their assent. And, if this liberty of examination, and of speaking and writing freely upon subjects of religion, be a bar, to a comprehension, such may it ever remain, till our brethren of the establishment have both felt and avowed this fundamental principle, THAT IT IS THE GLORY OF CHRISTIANITY TO INVITE THE SEVEREST ENQUIRY. Let bigotry and error endeavour to hide themselves in mysterious darkness, grow touchy and alarmed if you attempt to bring them into open light; but let every man who thinks he has good reasons for believing the truth of the Christian religion, boldly challenge every adversary to examine and to disprove it if he can; for if it be the work of men, it will come to nought; but, if it be of God, it cannot be overthrown.

We acknowledge, Sir, your goodness in bring-

* James ii. 19

ing down to our understanding the mystery of *consecrations of Churches and of church-yards*; and your kind attempt to illustrate the usefulness, edification and comeliness, of this ceremony. There are some previous questions, which I could wish to see answered, before we enter thoroughly into the grand debate:——as, whether you think the Apostle Paul, in all his apostolic labours and travels through the Churches, ever *consecrated a plat of Ground*? Whether the synagogues, where our Saviour preached; the chamber where he instituted and first celebrated his sacred supper; the upper-room, where the apostles met when they actually received the extraordinary gifts of the Holy Ghost; the house of Aquila and Priscilla, Nymphas, &c. in which were Christian Churches, had really any other consecration than our places of worship have? And, yet, whether these were not as much the *house of God*, and *places of his more immediate presence*, as any splendid cathedral now consecrated with all the pomp of sacerdotal device?*

You appeal to “the forms which Bishop Andrews and others have used in their consecrations: And ask, What think you now? Is there any thing ridiculous or superstitious in all this?”† Yes; extremely much of both, if they at all resemble that of Archbishop Laud, (the only one I have ever seen,) when he consecrated the Churches of St. Catharine Cree, St. Giles’s, and others in London. The form of this intolerable piece of ecclesiastical foppery, which no sound Protestant can read without indignation, has, in larger histories, been more than once published; but, having never seen it in any little tract, I shall beg leave to

* You have forgotten, perhaps, the doctrine of your own homily, to which you have several times solemnly subscribed, “That, in Tertullian’s time, 160 years after Christ, Christians had no other temples but common houses, whither, for the most part, they secretly resort—ed.” *Peril of Idol. Part III. page 159.*

† Appendix, page 45.

transcribe it for the edification of our common readers. It is a striking instance of the danger of indulging human invention in things of religion ; and shews into what wilds of ridiculous superstition even learned minds are apt to run when they leave the *simplicity of the gospel of Christ*.

“ The bishop came attended with several of the
 “ high commission, and some civilians. At his ap-
 “ proach to the west door of the Church, which was
 “ shut and guarded by halberdeers, some, that
 “ were appointed for that purpose, cried with a
 “ loud voice, *Open, open, ye everlasting doors, that*
 “ *the King of Glory may come in!* Presently the
 “ doors were opened, and the bishop, with some
 “ doctors and principal men, entered. As soon
 “ as they were within the place, his lordship fell
 “ down upon his knees ; and with eyes lifted up
 “ and his arms spread abroad, said, *This place is*
 “ *holy, the ground is holy : in the name of the Fa-*
 “ *ther, Son, and Holy Ghost, I pronounce it holy.*
 “ Then, walking up the middle aisle, towards the
 “ chancel, he took up some of the dust, and threw
 “ into the air several times. When he ap-
 “ proached near the rail of the communion-table,
 “ he bowed towards it five or six times ; and, re-
 “ turning, went round the church, with his at-
 “ tendants, in procellion, saying first the hun-
 “ dredth, and then the nineteenth, psalm, as pre-
 “ scribed in the Roman pontifical. He then read
 “ several collects, in one of which he prays God
 “ *to accept of that beautiful building,* and con-
 “ cludes thus :—*We consecrate this Church, and*
 “ *separate it unto thee as holy ground, not to be*
 “ *prophaned any more to common use.* In another
 “ he prays, *That all, who should hereafter be bu-*
 “ *ried within the circuit of this holy and sacred*
 “ *place, may rest in their sepulchres in peace till*
 “ *Christ's coming to judgement, and may then*
 “ *rise to eternal life and happiness.*
 “ Then the bishop, sitting under a cloth of
 “ state, in the aisle of the chancel, near the com-
 “ munion-table, took a written book in his hand,
 “ and

“ and pronounced *curfes* upon thofe who fhould
 “ hereafter profane that holy place by mufters of
 “ foldiers, or keeping profane law-courts, or car-
 “ rying burdens through it; and at the end of
 “ every curfe, he bowed to the Eaft, and faid,
 “ *Let all the people fay Amen.* When the curfes
 “ were ended, which were about twenty, he pro-
 “ nounced a like number of bleffings upon all
 “ that had any hand in framing and building that
 “ facred and beautiful Church, and on thofe that
 “ had given or fhould hereafter give, any cha-
 “ lices, plate, ornaments, or other utensils: and,
 “ at the end of every bleffing, he bowed to the
 “ Eaft, and faid, *Let all the people fay Amen.* Af-
 “ ter this came the fermen, then the facrament,
 “ which the bifhop confecrated and adminiftered
 “ in the following manner.

“ As he approached the altar, he made five or fix
 “ low bows; and coming up to the fide of it,
 “ where the bread and wine were covered, he
 “ bowed *feven* times. Then, after reading many
 “ prayers, he came near the bread; and gently
 “ lifting up the corner of the napkin, beheld it;
 “ and immediately letting fall the napkin, he re-
 “ treated haftily a ftep or two, and made three
 “ low obeifances. His lordfhip then advanced;
 “ and having uncovered the bread, bowed three
 “ times as before: then he laid his hand on the
 “ cup, which was full of wine, with a cover upon
 “ it, which having let go, he ftepped back, and
 “ bowed three times towards it: then he came
 “ near again; and lifting up the cover of the
 “ cup, looked into it; and feeing the wine, let
 “ fall the cover again, retired back, and bowed as
 “ before. Then the elements were confecrated,
 “ and the bifhop, having firft received, gave it to
 “ fome principal men in their fupplines, hoods,
 “ and tippets; after which, many prayers being
 “ faid, the folemnity of the confecration ended.”

This, Sir, was the manner in which that celebra-
 ted martyr and governor of your Church conduct-
 ed this bufinefs of confecration. And, what now
 think

think you? Was there nothing ridiculous or superstitious in all this! You seem, indeed not to have quite so exalted an opinion of this solemnity as his lordship; but, as the Church has no where (that I know) explained herself as to this matter, nor censured Laud's conduct, nor prescribed any set form in which this ceremony is to be done, any bishop, I apprehend, at present, is at full liberty to use the same, and may now consecrate a Church in the same manner as Laud did that of St. Catharine Cree. And, pray, to whom shall I attend as best knowing and expressing the Church's sense in this point; to the great Archbishop Laud, or to—the Rev. Mr. White, some time Fellow of St. John's College, Cambridge!

I have now done with your Appendix. There is another office of your Liturgy equally liable to the severe exceptions of all well-instructed Christians, and to the sneers of insulting Deists, as any I have yet considered; and that is, your *Office for the Ordination of Priests and Deacons*. This, if you call me forth again, I may more particularly shew. At present I only ask—Whether to your sober reason it really appears a fit question, to be put to every young gentleman that comes from the university for orders to the bishop, *Whether he trusts that he is inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost to take upon him this office?* And for every such young gentleman to declare solemnly, *as in God's presence, that he trusts he is so inwardly moved?* You well know how many rich livings are in the gift of families, whose sons, or dependants, are educated for the Church with no other view but that of its being the most genteel provision, in their power, for their future support in life. You must also be sensible, that the high dignities and great emoluments which are to be found in the Church, often lead many young gentlemen to prefer this profession to any other, merely from interested and worldly considerations. You certainly must be better acquainted than I am with the general manners, the taste, and the state, of the two

universities: tell me, then, before God is their moral state such, that you can reasonably think *every* student that comes thence, when he gets a title to a living, and applies for orders to the bishop, doth really *feel himself inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost* to make that application? Ought his feelings to be so hurt, and so pressing a question be put to his conscience? One of the brightest ornaments of your own Church, Bishop Burnet, (Pastoral Care, page 96 to 99,) has made the following observations on this point, which deserve the most serious attention of all those who ask, and of all those who answer, the before-mentioned most important question. "Certainly," says he, "this answer, *I trust I am so moved*, ought well to be considered; for if any say, *I trust so*, who yet know nothing of any such motion, and can give no account of it, HE LIES TO THE HOLY GHOST, and makes his first approach to the altar with a LIE in his mouth, and that not to men but to God. The motives, that ought to determine a man to dedicate himself to the Church, are a zeal for promoting the glory of God, and for raising the honour of the Christian religion. This man, and only this man, so moved and qualified, can, in truth and with a good conscience, answer, that he TRUSTS *he is inwardly moved by the Holy Ghost*; and every one, that ventures on the saying it without this, is a sacrilegious profaner of the name of God and his holy Spirit: he breaks in upon the Church not to feed but to rob it." And, when the bishop lays his hand on the student's head, then kneeling before him, and makes this solemn address, *Receive the Holy Ghost.---Whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins thou dost retain, they are retained; in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.* Is this a language which can be clearly justified? Do their lordships keep perfectly free of the offence which Bishop Burnet so justly condemns? Is there nothing like LYING *to the Holy Ghost* in the part which

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which they are called to act in this most serious affair? I shall make no farther reflections at present, but only say, that to me it appears really amazing, that, in an age of such discernment and freedom of enquiry, this form is suffered to stand. And, in the language of your collect, I very heartily pray, "That Almighty God, who alone worketh great marvels, would send down upon our bishops and curates, the healthful spirit of his grace:" the spirit of wisdom and humility! being assured that this stone of stumbling, in the way of sagacious infidels, will then quickly be removed.

In the mean time let none of the clergy any more reproach the separatists and the sectaries (as they affect to call us) with being enthusiasts and fanatics; for, what sect among all who dissent from the Church of England (Papists only excepted) carry their pretensions to spiritual motions and communications to so extravagant a height as the Church itself does? Doth the Quaker or the Methodist, talk of being moved by the Spirit, and of praying and preaching under the influence of the Spirit? Surely it does not become any clergyman to ridicule such language. He ought rather to give those who use it the *right hand of fellowship*; knowing that he also has been under the like impressions; and that, when he was ordained a deacon, he solemnly declared, before one of the successors of the apostles, that *he trusted that he was INWARDLY MOVED by the HOLY GHOST to take upon himself this office.*

But to conclude. I have the pleasure, Sir, to be persuaded that your mind is not now filled with those high and swelling thoughts of the excellence of your liturgy as when our correspondence began. The Dissenters, you find, are not the only persons who except strongly against your forms. Many of your learned clergy have, in a candid and respectful manner, and yet with a becoming courage, expressed great dissatisfaction with them. What effect their attempt for the enlargement of the Church's bounds, and for a farther reformation

tion and review, will produce, time alone will shew. Upon its present ground, the situation of the Church must appear, to every discerning mind to be extremely critical and uncertain.

It is difficult to defend it against the crafty attacks of Popery on the one hand, and, I think it actually impossible to support it against the assaults of Infidelity on the other. Between these *two stones* is there no room to apprehend its being quickly *ground to powder*? To the injurious idea, which many of your forms give of the Christian religion, the unhappy increase of Deism is in great measure owing: and there is the highest reason to believe that it will farther increase, if these forms, which are the just offence and ridicule of unbelievers, are not soon dismissed. But, when those who boast themselves the successors of the apostles and the only regular pastors and ministers of Christ, shall give proof that they are possessed of a truly apostolic virtue, and shall no longer *seek their own, but the things of Jesus Christ*, a review and a correction of every thing exceptionable will be no distant nor difficult event.

In the mean time, the Dissenters have the satisfaction to reflect, that, amidst various discouragements, they have, by their dissent, approved themselves loyal to the ONLY Sovereign of the Church, and faithful to a sacred trust committed to them by God, for which they must give an account. They rejoice in the review, that they have entered their protest against the impositions and inventions of men, which have corrupted the simplicity, enervated the vigour, deformed the beauty, and broken the communion, of the body of Christ. And whatever rash censures they may now incur from the prejudiced, the weak, and the interested, they with great assurance, hope to be not only approved, but applauded, by their judge hereafter; and, at his appearing, to receive *honour* proportioned to their present *reproach*.

When it shall please the Almighty Sovereign to awaken in the Christian world a spirit of genuine Christianity;—

Christianity;—when true honour shall prevail over cowardice and temporising;—when integrity and truth shall triumph over falsehood and error;—when that slavish ignoble principle, *that we are to conform to the established worship of the country where we dwell, whatever it be*, shall be held in deserved reproach,—a principle that greatly debases and corrupts the human soul, puts out its intellectual eye, chains up its noblest powers, robs it of its highest glory, viz. the searching into religious subjects, and offering to its creator a *reasonable service*;—in short, a principle that directly tends to banish every thing that deserves the name of religion, to drive all truth, and honour, and honesty, from among men; that will justify a man's professing himself a Mahomedan at Constantinople, a Pagan at Pekin, a Papist at Rome:—when, I say, this infamous and base principle shall be treated with just contempt, and men shall be every where disposed to seek with impartiality, and to practice without disguise, righteousness and truth: then, Sir, will the character of a rational Dissenter be had in universal honour: then will such appear to have been the only consistent Protestants, the true patrons of Christian liberty, Church-unity, and catholic communion, and the only body of Christians upon whom the guilt of schism does not really rest, because they open their communion to every sincere Christian, and require no terms but such as Christ and his apostles have required in the Church. However, whether you will throw in your lot, and partake with us in these honours or not, rest assured that I am,

S I R,

Yours, &c.

A DISSENTER.

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Can ye not discern the Signs of the Times? Matt. xvi.

[First printed in the Year 1755.]

My Lords,

IT is a very dark, and it becomes every day a more just, picture of the face of things around us, which was drawn by a late great prelate* of your Church, who thus paints and laments the complexion of the times.

“ An open disregard to religion is become,
 “ through a variety of unhappy causes, the distin-
 “ guishing character of the present age. This
 “ evil is grown to a great height in the metropo-
 “ lis of the nation, is daily spreading through
 “ every part of it, bringing in such dissoluteness
 “ and contempt of principle in the higher part of
 “ the world, and such profligate intemperance and
 “ and fearlessness of committing crimes in the
 “ lower, as must, if this torrent of impiety
 “ stop

* Archbishop Secker.

“ stop not, become absolutely fatal ; and God
 “ knows, far from stopping, it receives, through
 “ the ill designs of some, and the inconsiderateness
 “ of others, continual increase.

“ Christianity is now ridiculed and railed at
 “ with very little reserve, and the teachers of it
 “ without any at all. Disregard to public worship
 “ and instruction hath increased, many are grown
 “ prejudiced against religion, many more indiffer-
 “ ent about it. The emissaries of the Church of
 “ Rome have begun to reap great harvests in the
 “ field, which hath thus been prepared for them.

“ This melancholy state of things (his Grace
 “ proceeds) calls loudly upon us (the clergy) to
 “ correct our mistakes, to supply our deficiencies,
 “ and earnestly to beg of God, that he would di-
 “ rect the hearts of those who preside over the
 “ public welfare, and humbly to represent to them
 “ on all fit occasions, the declining state of religi-
 “ on, and the importance and the means of pre-
 “ serving it. These things are unquestionable
 “ duties.

It is from a deep sense of this duty that I pre-
 sume thus to address your lordships, and humbly
 to suggest some occasions of this spreading evil,
 which seem not to have been so thoroughly and so
 seriously adverted to as their importance deserves.
 To know the cause of a disease, in the body politic
 as well as natural, is the first step to its cure. The
 causes of the present prevailing scepticism are,
 no doubt, complicated and various. The strictness
 of the Christian morals, and the restraint which
 the gospel lays upon the corrupt appetites of men,
 are, probably the chief causes of some men's vio-
 lent opposition to it. But there are, my lords, I
 apprehend, a variety of inferior causes, *offences* the
 gospel calls them, which co-operate and help it on ;
offences, which confirm greatly men's prejudices
 against Christianity, and which strongly tempt, and
 seem to warrant, their treating things, reputed sa-
 cred, with much drollery and ridicule ; *offences*,
 which are found not in professors only, but in
 those who are set for its propagation and defence.

May

May I be permitted, my lords, with the freedom of a Christian, to expostulate on this subject? Things evidently seem to draw, as the archbishop above observes, to a dangerous and important crisis. When the exigency of affairs presses, a liberty of speech may with some confidence be claimed. Will your lordships then indulge me, whilst, with no greater freedom than the great danger of the cause seems plainly to require, I endeavour to point out some things which hang as a portentous weight upon the cause of Christianity, and are some of the *fatal stones* at which the sceptics of the present age stumble, dangerously stumble, and sometimes grievously fall. *It is impossible*, we are told, *but offences will come*; but *woe to that man*, woe to that Church, *by whom the offence cometh*!

Great, it must be owned, is the felicity of this nation in having so many of its established clergy, whose learning and whose lives reflect honour on their profession, and whose writings have blessed the world with some of the noblest defences of virtue and religion. But, as matters are at present constituted, are there not some things which greatly abate the force of the strongest arguments they offer? Some prejudices, which too naturally and too justly arise, of which disaffected minds not a little avail themselves in their opposition to Christianity!

The first unhappy cause of the growth of infidelity, which I beg leave to mention, is a general apprehension that the clergy themselves are not thoroughly persuaded of the truth and importance of the Christian religion, inasmuch as they solemnly subscribe articles which they do not really believe, and declare publicly, in God's presence, their *unfeigned assent and consent* to forms, in divine worship, which they highly disapprove, perhaps heartily condemn.

If this apprehension, my lords, should appear to be well founded; if there be good reason to think that your lordships, the bishops, do rigorously impose, and that the clergy do subscribe, Articles of Religion which neither you nor they do really believe;

believe; and that, in the most solemn manner, your lordships require, and they are constrained to give, unfeigned *assent and consent* to certain matters and forms which, at the same time, you both judge to be highly censurable and wrong: what will, my lords, what must, a doubting enquirer naturally conclude, but that the profession of Christianity is all artifice and pretence! that there is no such thing as conscience, integrity, or faith, in transactions relating to ecclesiastical concerns! that the terrors, which the gospel threatens to the hypocrite or unbeliever, are known, by those who preach them, to be only an empty phantom, as is also the future glory which it promises to those who are courageous to confess and to avow the truth!*

The Articles of Religion, which your lordships are obliged to make every clergyman subscribe, and which every clergyman does with great solemnity subscribe, it is notorious to the whole world, are strongly what is called Trinitarian and Calvinistic. Little less notorious is it, that the clergy do not generally entertain those religious

* Bishop Burnet says, "He is forced to declare, That, having had much free conversation with many who have been fatally corrupted with atheistic and infidel principles, they have very often owned to him, that nothing so much promoted this in them as the very bad opinion which they took up of all clergymen on all sides."

"That they did not see in them that strictness of life, that contempt of the world, that zeal, that meekness, humility, and charity, that diligence and earnestness, with relation to the great truths of the Christian religion, which they reckoned they would most certainly have if they themselves firmly believed it. They therefore concluded, that those, whose business it was more strictly to enquire into the truth of their religion, knew that it was not so certain, as they themselves, for other ends, endeavoured to make the world believe it was; and that, though, for the carrying on their own authority or fortunes, which, in one word, they call their TRADE, they seemed very positive in affirming the truth of their doctrine, yet they in their own hearts did not believe it, since they lived so little suitable to it." Pastoral Care, Preface, page 15, 16.

sentiments

sentiments which the articles express, and that many, if not most, of them are either Unitarians or Arminians. What, then, can any serious impartial spectator judge, when gentlemen, in the Unitarian scheme, subscribe solemnly, in God's presence, (i. e. calling upon him to witness the sincerity and truth with which they subscribe,) the first, the second, and the eighth, articles of the Church, which strongly assert; Art. I. "That there is but ONE living and true God,—And, in the UNITY of this Godhead, there be THREE persons of one substance, power, and eternity, the Father, Son, and Holy Ghost." Art. II. That the Son is "the VERY and ETERNAL GOD, of ONE substance with the Father." Art. VIII. "And that the creed of Athanasius ought thoroughly to be received and believed; for, it may be proved by most certain warrants of holy Scripture! And that whoever does not believe it faithfully, shall be most certainly and everlastingly damned!"

In like manner, those, who favour what is called the Arminian scheme, and reject the Calvinistic, stand forth before God, and subscribe, and declare that *they do it willingly and ex animo*, (i. e. sincerely and from their heart,) the ninth, thirteenth, seventeenth, and eighteenth, articles, as likewise the twentieth, which expressly affirm, Art. IX. "That original, or birth, sin, is the fault, or corruption, of the nature of every man that is naturally engendered of the offspring of Adam; and, in every person born into this world, it doth serveth God's WRATH and DAMNATION." Art. XIII. "That works, done before the grace of Christ, and the inspiration of his Spirit, are not pleasing to God, forasmuch as they spring not of faith in Jesus Christ; neither do they make men meet to receive grace; yea, we doubt not but they have the nature of sin." Art. XVII. "That predestination to life is the everlasting purpose of God, whereby (before the foundation of the world) he hath constantly decreed, by his counsel, secret to us, to deliver from curse and damnation those whom he hath chosen, in Christ

“ Christ, out of mankind, and to bring them by
 “ Christ to everlasting salvation, as vessels made to
 “ honour. And, as the godly consideration of
 “ predestination and our election in Christ is full
 “ of sweet, pleasant, and unspeakable, comfort to
 “ godly persons, so, for curious and carnal per-
 “ sons, lacking the spirit of Christ, to have conti-
 “ nually before their eyes the sentence of God’s
 “ predestination, is a most dangerous downfal,
 “ whereby the Devil doth thrust them either into
 “ desperation or into wretchedness of most unclean
 “ living.”

Art. XVIII. “ They also are to be held accurs-
 “ ed, who presume to say, that every man shall be
 “ saved by the law, or sect, which he professeth,
 “ so that he be diligent to frame his life according
 “ to that law and the light of nature.” Art. XX.
 “ The Church hath power to decree rites and ce-
 “ remonies, and authority in controversies of
 “ faith.”

These, my lords, are articles which the Church
 represents as the plain and the undoubted doctrines
 of Christianity. This it declares to be the true
 gospel of Jesus Christ: and these it obliges every
 one of its ministers to subscribe with his hand;
 and, in the presence of Almighty God, solemnly to
 declare, *that he believes them to be agreeable to the*
*word of God,** before he is admitted to officiate in
 that character.

Now, if the generality of the clergy † do in
 their consciences believe this, (in some one point
 at least, or more, if not all,) to be a very false re-

* Canon XXXVI.

† Predestination, (says a learned member of your Church,)
 “ a doctrine shocking, and manifestly contrary to all the
 “ notions men naturally have of God as a wise, just, and
 “ good being, was opposed by Arminius, who left behind
 “ him a man better qualified than himself to carry on the
 “ cause he had espoused. I mean the great Episcopius,
 “ whose writings soon flew all over Europe, and were
 “ much read by the divines of the Church of England, and
 “ to very good purpose; for, soon after, Calvinism vanished
 “ from among them quite and clean.” Clarke’s Essay on

Study, page 13, 16.

presentation

presentation of the doctrines of Christianity; a representation injurious to the perfections of God, very highly dishonourable and repugnant to the gospel-scheme, but do nevertheless consent thus solemnly to subscribe the articles above mentioned, and to declare them to be *agreeable to the Scriptures*: What my lords, I again ask with great astonishment and concern, will not only sagacious Deists, but every attentive person, with good reason, presume,—but that honesty and truth are fled from the earth; at least that the church of England is no more the temple where these sacred guests reside! Whenever it shall be generally understood, that “the contempt of principle,” which the archbishop complains of “in the higher parts of the world,” reigns not only there, but has spread its baneful influence on that order of men whose duty it is to be PATTERNS as well as PREACHERS of uncorrupted faith and integrity, such an apprehension will naturally produce those fatal effects which his grace laments: “Christianity” (as taught by such men) “will be ridiculed and railed at with very little reserve, and the teachers of it with none at all.” *If the salt hath lost its saltiness, our blessed Saviour has expressly said, relating to this very point, it is cast out to the dunghill, and trodden under foot.**

Original sin, one of the most learned of our late bishops † hath frankly declared “to be a contradiction in terms: for, as the word *sin* implies an act of the will, so the word *original* implies the direct contrary; and supposes the criminal act to have been committed by another person, to which act that person, to whom the sin is imputed, neither contributed by thought, word, or deed.”

* So the late Bishop of Winchester, in his excellent sermons, “acknowledges it a thing beyond all contradiction, that the doctrine of the Church of England, delivered in its articles, relating to justification, God’s decrees, and what are called the *five points*, had undergone such alterations as to be entirely changed in the writings and discourses of most of the members of that Church.” Sermon on Contending for the Faith.

† Thoughts on Self-love, innate Ideas, &c. page 17.

But, besides the contradiction in terms, which the learned bishop asserts; to affirm, my lords, as the ninth article is supposed to do, that every member of the human race, upon the account of Adam's sin, doth really *merit God's wrath and damnation*; that is to say, that infants are no sooner born than they become just objects of God's heavy anger and *DESERVE to be damned*;—to be damned for an act in which they had not the least share; an act committed before they came into being; that the all perfect and blessed God is angry, even to wrath, with the works of his own hands, who never did or were ever, capable of doing any thing to offend him; this, my lords, will be pronounced a doctrine so abhorrent to nature, to justice, to truth, (may it not be said so impious and profane?) that it is candidly presumed that there is not one sensible and sober clergyman in the kingdom who believes it; and yet, how astonishing is it to consider! there is not one clergyman in the kingdom who has not solemnly subscribed it, not one bishop in the kingdom who does not absolutely insist upon it as an indispensable condition of admission to the Christian ministry,—even the learned bishops not excepted, who are presumed to know and to acknowledge it to be a contradiction in terms.*

Is there any virtue, my lords, or honour, any prudence, or discretion, in such a procedure as this? Does it not directly tend to violate and lay waste the conscience, to throw down every fence of integrity and truth, to open a way for all manner of licentiousness, both of principle and of practice, to break in like a deluge, and to sweep from society all distinction between right and wrong? For, why, it may be justly asked,

* In the office for private baptism *children are declared to be born in the WRATH OF GOD*. How shocking the thought! and how absolutely contradictory to the express blessing and command of God, Genesis ix. 1. *Be you fruitful, and multiply, and replenish the earth*: and Psalm cxxvii. 3. *Lo, children are an heritage of the Lord, and the fruit of the womb is his reward*.

should

should it be accounted more criminal to equivocate and deceive on the Exchange than in the Church? Yea, why more atrocious to kiss the book in a civil court, in attestation of a fact which I believe to be false, than to subscribe, before God, to Articles of Religion which I do not believe to be true? To me, my lords, I profess solemnly that the actions appear much the same in a moral estimation; and that false-swearing in the state seems nearly as reconcileable to honesty and truth, as fallacious and insincere subscribing in the Church.

There are a variety of evasive shifts, I know, many mental reservations and forced explications, by which gentlemen endeavour to soften and extenuate their conduct in this manner; but, if weighed in an impartial balance, these will be found to be of a nature unspeakably detrimental, and even destructive, to society, tending utterly to defeat the use of language among men, to confound sentiments and ideas, to banish all precision, and indeed all meaning, from words, and to bring in everlasting darkness and ambiguity in their stead. In short, are they not such, that, if any man should act the same part in commercial or civil life, would he not for ever forfeit his honour upon the Exchange or in a Court of justice, rouse a general indignation against him, and consign his character to lasting infamy and reproach?

There are, my lords, I apprehend, no subterfuges, or softenings, by which an Arian can subscribe the doctrines and the curse of Athanasius's creed, or an Arminian the article of Original Sin, and declare solemnly that he believes, them *to be agreeable to the word of God*, but what would, on the same principles, equally justify him in eluding the strictest examination, by disguising, or concealing, the truth, if examined on his oath, in a cause of the greatest moment in Westminster-hall.

Is not this to give occasion to those who are too ready to seek occasion not only to disbelieve, but

to reproach and vilify, our most holy religion? Is it strange if sagacious Deists ridicule the Christian priesthood, insult a character and an office so surreptitiously obtained, and treat all their pretended zeal about doctrines and truth as mere form and grimace! The temptation to such a conduct is exceedingly strong, and you ought not to wonder if it has had a very powerful effect.

Here, my lords, might I be indulged, I would beg leave to remark on the extreme vanity and inutility, not to say the growing mischief, of thus demanding subscriptions to human articles and forms; and to express my astonishment, that a measure so palpably absurd should have gained, for so long a time, so deep a footing in the Church.

The holy Scriptures, your lordships, and all Protestant divines, acknowledge to be a *perfect rule of faith*. In them all needful and important doctrines are so plainly revealed, in words dictated by the holy Spirit,* that no sincere person can possibly mistake concerning them, so as dangerously to err. Subscription, therefore, to those Scriptures, is all that the interest of truth and of religion (even on your own principles) can really require. Now, should any man upon earth or any body of men take upon them to draw up articles and formulas of faith, in words different from the holy Scriptures, and to propose them as a *rule of faith* or a *test of truth* to others, what, my lords, is the real nature, or the proper language, of such an action! Is it not plainly this, that he thinks himself able to define the doctrines of Revelation in more apt and proper terms than those of the holy Spirit? Does he not, in effect, say that the great truths of religion, as they stand revealed in the Scriptures, (in words which

* 1 Cor. ii. 13. Which things also we speak, not in the words which man's wisdom teacheth, but which the Holy Ghost teacheth.

not man's wisdom, but which the wisdom of God dictated,) are not so distinctly and clearly expressed as man's wisdom, yea, as his own wisdom, is able to express them? And is not this, my lords, presumptuously to set himself up as a corrector of the holy Spirit, to declare himself capable of mending the revelation which God has made, and to profess himself authorized to dictate to the faith of others, and to interpret the Scriptures for them?

Will it be said that crafty and corrupt men may pervert the words of the holy Spirit, and screen dangerous errors under scriptural forms? Let it be said. And will not crafty and corrupt men as easily pervert, and as lightly violate and break through, all the articles, and forms which human skill can devise, or human prudence prescribe? Is it not evident, from the reason and nature of things, that this will always be the case? Has not the experience of fourteen hundred years put it beyond all doubt? Will any articles, or forms of doctrine, prove a fence against a man of an insincere and corrupt heart, or keep him out of the Church? No: he will ever swim with the stream; he will declare, or subscribe to, any thing, as his worldly interest directs. The men of principle and conscience, your lordships well know, are they only who can be kept out of the Church by these subscriptions; so that, if these supposed securities are rightly considered, they cannot possibly be the least guard against error. And when withal it is remembered, how, in all ages of the Church, they have been most mischievously employed by the several parties of Christians as they have alternately prevailed, what wreck they have made of conscience, what sacrifices of integrity to human ignorance and pride, what engines they have proved, in the hands of the *rulers of the darkness of this world*, to torture and oppress good men, and so exalt and aggrandize the bad! scarcely any thing can be more amazing than that a measure so notoriously preposterous

posterior and absurd,—a measure so directly tending to bring corruption into the Church, and to keep integrity and conscience out of it,—should be still patronised by men, of whom so many are unquestionably both wise and good.

What has been above suggested, with reference to subscriptions to Articles of Religion, is, my lords, in a great measure applicable to the declaration of *unfeigned assent and consent to ALL and EVERY THING contained and prescribed in and by the Book of Common Prayer*, which every clergyman is obliged, in the most solemn manner, to make. That there are many things contained in that book which a great number of the clergy, of the most exemplary virtue and distinguished abilities, consider as highly censurable, and wish earnestly to have reformed, your lordships, and the world, are abundantly convinced.*

But this assent and consent, which the law requires of them obliges not only to the mere use, (though to use forms in divine worship, which any man in his conscience believes to be not agreeable to the divine will, and which are apprehended to give wrong and injurious representations of the great things of religion, seems absolutely repugnant to that reverence of the Deity which is essential to his rational and acceptable worship,) but this assent and consent, I say, obliges the clergyman not merely to the use, (as the parliament itself after a solemn debate, expressly determined,) but

* The order for reading in public worship the Apocryphal romances of Tobit, Bell and the Dragon,—sponsors introduced to the exclusion of the parents,—the questions put to the infant, and the answers expected from it, in the office of baptism—the authoritative absolution and forgiveness of all sin, directed to be pronounced in the Visitation of the Sick,—the expressions of strong hope of the happiness after death of some of the vilest of men, in the office for burial,—the creed, called Athanasius's with the dreadful sentence of damnation—most certain, inevitable, everlasting, damnation—upon every soul of man that does not thoroughly believe it.—Vide—Candid Disquisitions.—Appeal to the common sense of all Christian People, &c.

to an approbation as well as use, of the things contained in that book.* Accordingly, the clergy are not only to declare, but to subscribe with their hands, that the *Common Prayer-book contains nothing in it contrary to the word of God.*†

Now, whether the clergy being compelled to profess, in this solemn manner, *unfeigned assent and consent* to things which, it is notorious, many, if not most of the wisest and most serious of them greatly disapprove, does at all tend to promote the dignity of an order represented as sacred,—whether it is for the honour of Christianity, or of the least service to the cause of virtue and truth,—rather, whether it has not had, and must not necessarily have, a contrary, very pernicious, and fatal effect,—is submitted to your lordships serious consideration.

It will also, I trust, become every day more and more worthy of your calm attention, whether these pernicious and fatal effects will not be continually increasing. You see, my lords, a most respectable part of your own clergy (to their immortal honour be it spoken) entering a humble, decent, yet manly, protest, against these unscriptural claims on the right of conscience. When so many of the gravest, the most learned, and pious, of your own Church, are either nobly withdrawing from its service, or, with a steady perseverance, requiring to be restored to that liberty wherewith Christ has made them free, it might be presumed that even worldly prudence (all religious principles apart) would lead the governors of the Church to *discern the signs of the times*, and assume the merit of a reformation, which the enlightened spirit of the age demands, and which sooner or later must be obtained.

Infidelity gains ground: loose and immoral

* Lords Journals, Vol. XI. page 573, 574, 577. Commons Journals, Vol. VIII. page 533, 534. Calamy's Life of Baxter, Vol. I. page 205, and second Defence page 119.

† Canon XXXVI.

principles spread dangerously among all ranks: foundations seem to shake: the generality of mankind, glad to be set free from the restraints of religion, have an ear always open to what can plausibly be said to weaken its authority, and to discredit revelation. Should the conduct of its ministers give ground for strong presumption, that, amidst all the zeal and solemnity of external appearances, they think lightly of these things themselves, and subscribe and declare not according to the real sense and judgement of their own minds, but as worldly interest, or party or preferment, invite, what wonder, my lords, if men of unsettled principles, or of vicious and bad hearts, catch greedily at the occasion, and pour out all their stores of wit and ridicule, of contempt and execration, on them; declaim without any reserve against priests and their craft, call religion a cheat, and plunge into the deepest horrors of scepticism and infidelity!

What wonder, "if it brings in such dissoluteness and "contempt of principle in the higher "part of the world, (as the archbishop above observes,) and such profligate intemperance and "fearlessness of committing crimes in the lower, "as must, if this torrent of impiety stop not, become absolutely fatal!" Finally, what wonder to hear the people trifling with damnation and mutual curses in the streets, when thirteen times a year they hear their leaders in religion trifling (much worse than trifling) with them in their solemn offices in the Church! It is certainly, my lords, matter of very serious doubt, whether all the curses and damnations, which are wantonly poured out by the army, the navy, and the lower classes of mankind, are really more offensive to Almighty God, attended with greater guilt, or more threaten to draw down divine displeasure upon the land, than those which are denounced solemnly by the standing order of the Church.*

* Vide Article IX. and XVIII. Canon 2, 3, 4, 5, 6, 7, 8, and the Athanasian creed.

The unhappy divisions under which the Christian Church labours, the sects and separations into which it is split, are generally considered as greatly prejudicial to the cause of Christianity, and as another fatal occasion of the growth of infidelity. May I be permitted, my lords, to expostulate freely on this head, and to enquire, whether your lordships have not here also a great deal to apprehend from the trial of a future day?

There is a sentiment of great weight, with which the late Bishop of London, in his excellent sermon,* presses unbelievers; and, by changing the terms, it is extremely applicable to the present subject: "The case, betwixt your lordships and those Fellow-Christians you reject, must be once more argued before the judgment-seat of God. Do you reject them because ———: consider well. Is this a reason that will justify you to the face of God?"

The power of ordination, or of sending forth ministers to officiate in the Christian Church, is claimed by your lordships as a trust committed solely to you by Christ, the supreme Pastor: a trust, my lords, of a nature extremely important; upon the right discharge of which the interest of that Church which *he hath purchased with his own blood*, its instruction and growth in knowledge and goodness, very greatly depend; a trust, therefore, most surely to be accounted for with great strictness to him, the supreme Pastor, from whom it was received.

But suppose, my lords, it should then be asked, as there is the highest reason to apprehend it will be asked, "How was it that you refused to commit this ministry to any but to those who would subscribe and declare *unfeigned assent* to certain articles and forms which you knew to be no doctrines, or parts, of my religion! Were you not *charged before God, and the Lord Jesus Christ, and the elect angels to do nothing*, in this matter, *by partiality, preferring one before another*, upon any secular considerations?"

* Bishop Sherlock, Discourse I. page 33.

" 1 Tim.

" 1. Tim. v. 21. Had you authority from God to
 " put this yoke upon the neck of my disciples, and
 " thus to limit this trust? Were you not con-
 " vinced, that, by this limitation, you excluded
 " from the Christian ministry many faithful and
 " worthy persons, men capable of great service,
 " and duly qualified for it, according to my law,
 " prescribed in the Scripture-canon? By what
 " authority, then, or by what law, did you de-
 " prive the Christian Church of the ministrations
 " of these persons, and deprive them of the op-
 " portunity of ministering therein?"

In that critical and awful moment, my lords,
 will it be sufficient to reply, (yet what else can be
 replied?) It was by the authority of the civil ma-
 gistrate, who, by the Act of Uniformity, com-
 manded us not to receive them, either to the
 Christian ministry or communion, but upon terms
 of his devising: in obedience to that authority we
 rejected them from both.

With what a look of indignation will such a plea
 be received by the surrounding army of martyrs,
 who nobly sacrificed their lives rather than sacri-
 fice their conscience to the authority of the civil
 magistrate! And how severe a frown must it draw
 from the face of the Judge! " Did the civil ma-
 " gistrate die for you? Were you baptised into
 " his name, or redeemed by his blood? Can the
 " civil magistrate now save you, or give you ad-
 " mission into the kingdom of heaven? He gave
 " you, indeed, the honours and emoluments of
 " his kingdom; and, for these, you paid him ho-
 " mage, the homage of your conscience, by ac-
 " knowledging his authority to make laws in my
 " kingdom, and by imposing, at his pleasure,
 " such terms of ordination, and of communion in
 " the Christian sacraments, as I never enjoined;
 " and thus, to the notorious impeachment of my
 " authority, to the injury of my disciples, and to
 " the dividing of my Church, you publicly rejected
 " those whom you knew, or might have known,
 " that I honoured and received. And, *verily, inso-*
 " *much as ye did it to these, my brethren, ye did it*
 " *unto me.* Was it not my express command that you
 " should

“ should call no man upon earth master, that you;
 “ should acknowledge no authority in matters of
 “ religion but mine? Was not this authority a
 “ prerogative, a glory, given in reward of my
 “ meritorious death? Is not the *Lamb that was*
 “ *slain*, and is not he alone, *worthy to receive*
 “ *this honour*? But, by submitting to another
 “ sovereign in things pertaining to religion, and
 “ enforcing his laws to the exclusion of my ser-
 “ vants from the Christian ministry and church,
 “ to that sovereign has your allegiance been un-
 “ worthily transferred. See if he can now re-
 “ ward the homage you have paid him! —
 “ Whoever thus seeks to obey and please men, he
 “ is not the servant of Christ.” Gal. i. 10.

The brethren, my lords, whom you reject,
 have lodged their appeal before a supreme Court:
 there you are to appear with them, and the cause
 is to be re-heard. Consider well, (to resume the
 words of the venerable bishop,) *are the reasons*
on which you now reject them such as will be
sufficient to justify you to the face of God?

Being entered to far into this important subject,
 will your lordships permit me to advance a step
 farther, and to observe, that it is an objection
 against Christianity, even with some men of
 sense, who may not have carefully studied its real
 nature, and evidences, that as it stands exhibited in
 our public forms and in the rituals of the Church,
 it carries in it such marks of imposture, as, in
 their opinion, justify the suspicions that it could
 not possibly come from God. For, it ascribes to
 all its clergy such high and transcendent powers,
 as a God of infinite wisdom can never be supposed
 to have given; powers, which, were they actu-
 ally possessed, would make it not only the duty,
 but the interest, of the princes of the earth to bow
 down before them, and of the people to pay them
 the most unlimited submission.

Christianity, my lords, as it is professed and
 practised by your lordships, imparts to all its bi-
 shops *a power to give the Holy Ghost*, and to all
 its priests, through your lordship's hands, it gives
 A a authority

authority either *to forgive* or *to retain the sins* which men commit against the majesty and laws of heaven. Sin, divines have taught us, is ever to be considered as the greatest of all evils, far more to be dreaded than poverty, sickness, pain, or death. This appears to have been the general sentiment of mankind in all ages of the world. Accordingly, what sacrifices have not men made, what penances have they not submitted to, what pilgrimages performed, to obtain the forgiveness of their crimes, readily offering up—not hecatombs of beasts only and rivers of oil,—but even their own beloved children, *the fruit of their body for the sin of their soul!* Now this evil, *sin*, which is so justly the object of men’s direful apprehensions, there is not a priest your lordships ordain but you give him full power and authority either *to forgive* or *to retain* in the name of the Father, the Son, and the Holy Ghost; and to qualify him for fulfilling this important commission, to which no man can be equal without divine assistance, you give him the Holy Ghost.

Receive (you say) the Holy Ghost. Whose sins THOU dost forgive, they are forgiven; and whose sins THOU dost retain, they are retained; in the name of the Father, of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost. Amen.

These are the stupendous powers, my lords, with which your lordships invest, and send forth into the world, every priest you ordain. And, in consequence of these powers, in the Visitation of the Sick, upon the person’s confessing, and desiring absolution, (nay, sometimes without it, as in the case of Charles II. *) the priest pronounces, as from the mouth of Almighty God, this solemn sentence of remission.

By the authority committed unto me, I absolve thee from ALL thy sins, in the name of the Father, and of the Son, and of the Holy Ghost.

* In the case of Charles II. the absolution was given without any confession. See Bp Burnet’s observations on it in the Postscript, page 277.

His holiness, the Pope, who is, I apprehend, the first clergyman upon earth who claims to himself this power, and from and through whom all clergymen who assume it must acknowledge it to be derived; his holiness, I say, supposing him to be possessed of this power, most rightly demands homage of all secular potentates, and declares himself *prince of all the kings of the earth*; and all potentates and people, who acknowledge this power, most rightly pay the ceremony of the stirrup and the slipper, and bow with veneration before their LORD GOD, THE POPE.*

But this power, my lords, which gives the Pope this pre-eminence over all princes, (and which gives it most justly if really possessed,) is the very same (my lords, I repeat it, is the very same) which your lordships declare yourselves to give to every priest you ordain. For, the power to *forgive*, or *to retain*, the sins of men is the very same as to have the *keys of the kingdom of heaven*, either to open or shut its gates. If, therefore, your lordships, the bishops, do, as you most solemnly profess, give this transcendent power, you really constitute so many delegates and high commissioners from heaven, and authorise them to dispense its pardons or its curses among men. And what reverence or revenue will any man, who loves his soul, think too great to be given to such characters as these!†

If this, my lords, be Christianity, is it any wonder that Christianity is ridiculed, is despised, is railed at and reviled with very little reserve?

* This title he assumes, and it is publicly given him.

† This doctrine, if believed by the laity, ought to bring them at the priest's feet, as the ambassadors of Palermo at the feet of Pope Martin IV. repeating thrice these words, "Thou, that takest away the sins of the world, have mercy upon us!"

"Profane, beyond all profaneness, (says Dr. Clarke,) is the doctrine of those who contend that the apostles themselves, much less that any of their fallible successors, had a discretionary power of forgiving or retaining whose sins they pleased." Dr. Samuel Clarke's Sermon, Vol. VIII. Sermon XVII.

But

But is not this, my lords, the Christianity, (I appeal to your lordships impartial judgement and to that of the whole world,) is not this the Christianity which stands exhibited in the public forms and in the constant practice of your Church?

May I be permitted to add, if, to a judgement of the greatest candour, there appears strong reason to presume that their lordships, the bishops of that Church, know that they have no power from Almighty God to give the Holy Ghost at the very time that they are professing, with great solemnity, to give it; and, that they have no authority from the sacred Trinity to invest the priests they ordain with ability *to forgive* or *to retain* the sins of men, at the very time, that, in so solemn a manner, they are pretending to impart it to them; and, finally, that the priest, at the very time that, in the name of the holy Trinity, he is authoritatively absolving a man from the guilt of all his sins, knows, in his own conscience, that he has no authority at all from God to absolve him from any one sin;—if, to a judgement of the greatest candour my lords, there appears reason thus to think, what idea must men form of the religion of such actions and such characters as these! What sentiments and reflections must naturally arise when they see their lordships stand forth in the presence of Almighty God, professing before his Church to confer gifts and to impart spiritual and transcendent powers, if they are conscious, at the very time, that the whole solemnity is mere parade, and that they have no ability at all to give them! What wonder if, in the indignation which such a sight must inspire, Christianity be abhorred by persons already not prejudiced in its favour, or at all kindly disposed to it, and treated as an errant cheat, and its ministers as impostors, assuming mock-powers to terrify, to delude, and to enslave, the souls of men?

But Christianity, God be praised, Scripture-Christianity, is quite free from this reproach. A power *to forgive* or *to retain sins* it gave only to the twelve apostles, the founders of the Christian Church;

Church; and, to qualify them for this trust, they were actually inspired and *filled with the Holy Ghost*; they had the gift of discerning spirits, could miraculously smite incorrigible offenders with diseases or death, as they did Elymas the sorcerer, Ananias and Sapphira, and thus retained, or bound, their sins upon them: and they had power also miraculously to cast out devils, and to heal all manner of diseases, and thus forgave, or released, men, from the penalty of their sins.

But as this power, since the apostolic age, is ceased (by all Protestants acknowledged to be ceased) from the Church, and nothing but the miraculous operation of the holy Spirit can possibly impart it, or qualify a person for it, how strange beyond expression is it, that amidst the great piety and learning which its keenest adversaries must confess to subsist in the Church, a pretension so extravagant, not to say profane, should still maintain a place!

What adds, my lords, exceedingly to the absurdity of this claim is, that this form of ordaining priests, *Receive the Holy Ghost,—whose sins thou dost forgive, they are forgiven, &c.*—was never used, never known, in the Christian Church for the first thousand years; was never attempted to be introduced till the eleventh or twelfth century, which every one knows was a period of the deepest ecclesiastical darkness, stupidity, and oppression.

Morinus, a learned priest,* has published sixteen of the most antient rituals, or forms of ordination, used in the Church from the earliest ages of Christianity in which any such are found. In the several changes and additions under which these forms have successively past, is seen how the spirit of superstition gradually wrought;* every

A a 3 age

* De Ordin. Sacr. See a Vindication of the Ordination of the Church of England, by Bishop Burnet. Printed 1688.

† In the ordination of a bishop,—the anointing the head, and hands, and thumb, with oil,—the laying the gospel on his

age adding some ridiculous rite, or some extravagant claim, to the inventions of the former, till it grew to the present enormous mass in the Roman pontifical.

But it is peculiarly worthy of attention, my lords, that in not one of the first fifteen rituals (from the fifth to the twelfth century) doth the form now used, *Receive the Holy Ghost; whose sins, &c.* appear. It is the last only, the sixteenth, (which Morinus takes to be but about three hundred years old,) which assumes to itself this power. Yea, amidst the pride and intoxication of this corruptest state of the Church, so much sense and modesty seem still to have remained, that this extravagant claim was not universally admitted; for, the learned priest observes, that, in two other pontificals of the same age, this form, *Receive the holy Ghost, &c.* was not found.

And is this extravagant pretension, my lords, which the Church of Rome, amidst all its pride and wantonness of superstition, from the fifth to the twelfth century, never presumed to make, now openly avowed and adopted by our Church! This plant, which sprang up from the most corrupted state which even the papacy ever saw, is it not only received into this enlightened, this reformed, this noble, part of the Christian vineyard, but is here suffered to take root and to flourish! May God, in his mercy, awaken a spirit of in-

his head,—the gloves,—the sandals,—the ring,—the staff, the dalmatica, (a vestment like a cross,)—the mitre—the inthronization, or seating him in his chair,—most of which are attended with respective collects or prayers.

In the ordination of a priest,—the blessing and consecration of his hands,—the anointing them with oil,—then anointing his head,—then the sacred vestment given with a solemn benediction,—then the sacred vessels, the patten with the hosties, and the chalice with the wine, are given with these words, *Receive thou power to offer sacrifice, &c.*—then the bishop makes a cross in his hand with oil and chrism,—then lays his hand on the priest's, and says, *Receive the Holy Ghost, whose sins, &c.*

tegrity

tegrity and of fortitude in all whom it may concern, and wipe off from the Christian name the deep scandal and reproach which it unrighteously suffers!

Is there no room, my lords, to apprehend the displeasure of Almighty God at the representing Christianity in so injurious a light? Were the men of Bethshemeth smitten with death for looking presumptuously into the ark,* and Uzza, for stretching out his hand to support it,† and Ananias and Sapphira for lying to the Holy Ghost,‡ and can the sacred name of God, and the doctrines, the rites, and sacraments, of Christianity, be trifled with, profaned, and prostituted, to purposes of worldly interest and ambition, without danger of divine resentment? Is there not a time coming when God will *visit for these things?*||

The *signs of the times* seem strongly to prognosticate some approaching great events. Christianity is now passing a strict examination: it shuns not, but invites, the most critical search. The natural consequence of this free enquiry will be, that superstition will totter, and that all claims and pretensions, of a spiritual kind, which are not founded on truth will fall before the *axe laid at the root*.

The freedom of thinking, in which the present age glories, is, indeed, dissipating apace the charm of spiritual forcery, by which the understandings and consciences of men in the former ages were enthralled. But it is too natural to the human

* 1 Sam. vi. 19. † 2 Sam. vi. 7. ‡ Acts v. 5.

|| It was the complaint of the late excellent Bishop Burnet, (and there are many others, no doubt of my lords the bishops, who can sincerely make the same,) *that the ember-weeks were the burden and grief of his life*, and that the things that he was then called to see and to perform, with regard to the candidates who came to be ordained, *did often tear his heart, and pierced his soul, and made him cry out, oh! that I had the wings of a dove!* Pastoral Care, Preface to the 3d edition.

mind

mind to run into extremes; and, from having broken the chains of gloomy superstition, to rush headlong into the wilds of discomolate infidelity, Into this extreme of infidelity men of all ranks, as well in high life as among their inferiors, are hastily running. And it seems, my lords, to require no *spirit of prophecy* to say, *whither these things tend, and what their end will shortly be!* It is easy to foresee that they directly tend to the utter demolition not only of the present ecclesiastical system, but of all established forms and offices of religion: that the sceptical and loose principles, which spread through the land, are the dangerous artillery which the enemy is playing upon the high-places and the strong holds of the Church; that, therefore, prudence strongly dictates, that we not only desert, but level, what are called the out-works which we know to be untenable; and call in every friendly hand to unite, as one body, in the common defence.

It was, perhaps, with little less than a prophetic spirit that a very learned and worthy prelate has expressed his wish,—“That something was done to convince the world that the clergy of the Church are not averse to a reformation of some parts of her public service; since, otherwise, they may give offence by their obstinacy and seeming infallibility; and, if a storm should arise, may run a risk of having the tree torn up by the roots which they might have saved by a little pruning.”*

The period, my lords, is approaching in which the *angel is commanded to thrust in his sharp sickle, and to gather the clusters of the vine of the earth,* (i. e. of the mundane, or worldly, Church,) *because her grapes are fully ripe.*† A disposition seems moving in all nations around us, in nations where it could least have been expected to appear, to scrutinize and retrench the exorbitant claims and revenues of the Church, and to demand some of the immense superfluous wealth

* Essay on Spirit, preface, page 53. † Rev. xiv. 14.
of

of that opulent ally for the pressing exigencies of the state. And if, in countries where Popery reigns in all its rigor, these retrenchments are made, what may not justly be expected in our own, where dissoluteness and want of principle (as the pious Archbishop above observes) spread widely among the higher ranks, whilst the lower are divided into numerous sects, not zealously attached to the pomp of the established worship; and whilst the emissaries from Rome are seducing thousands into their tents, all whose power and cunning will be exerted to the utmost, on the least inviting occasion, to demolish the fortresses whose artillery have severely galled them, and upon whose ruins they hope again to raise their exploded superstition to its ancient grandeur.

Is there any way more likely to procure a lengthening of tranquillity than, as the prophet advises, *to break off iniquity by righteousness*, to correct mistakes, to supply deficiencies, to remove the rocks upon which the integrity of thousands hath been miserably wrecked, to demolish separating walls, and to extend the arms of the Church as wide as those of Christ and the apostles were extended. That Church alone, which is built upon this catholic and wide bottom, is likely to stand firm, and to sustain the shocks of rising storms.

Having trespassed, I fear, too much upon your lordships patience already, I shall proceed no farther than to remind you, that, as your lordships have the glory of standing in the first rank of the defenders of our holy faith, and many learned men of your body have, with irresistible force, pleaded the cause of Christianity against its avowed enemies, so there is a service, yet behind, to which God, your country, and the interest of religion, seem loudly to call you forth. Christianity, my lords, lies bleeding of the wounds it hath received *in the house of its friends*; wounds by far the most dangerous of any under which it suffers: there are none more able than your lordships to apply a healing hand. The high reverence and
esteem

esteem in which your lordships are held by all ranks of the clergy, and the influence you are possessed of in the legislature, will give a weight and success to any salutary counsels your lordships may propose, which cannot so easily be obtained from any other quarter. Through the favour of heaven, we are blessed with a government which, there is reason to believe, needs only to be petitioned, by those who have the administration of spiritual affairs, to ease them of any grievances, to supply any defects, and to alter or reform whatever, in the present system, may need to be reformed.

Many of your predecessors, my lords, have been so penetrated by the love of truth, so devoted to what they believed to be the genuine doctrines of Christianity, that they suffered bonds, imprisonment, and even a tormenting death itself, rather than support, by their influence or example, the cause of superstition and error. But your lot, my lords, is cast in much happier times. You are so favourably circumstanced, that you have it in your power to forward the reformation of those corruptions in the English Church which the wisest of your body presume not to defend; and, at the same time, you may preserve your temporal emoluments, recover your declining influence in the Christian Church, give peace to thousands of sincere but, at present, aggrieved and offended Christians, enlarge, and be enabled triumphantly to defend, the catholic ground upon which alone the reformation can possibly be defended; and, in short, may cause yourselves to be considered by the present, and honoured and revered by future generations, as the illustrious friends of genuine and uncorrupted religion, of liberty, and of truth.

But permit me, my lords, to remind you, that these advantages, even great as they are, vanish into nothing when compared with the future glorious recompence which will await every sincere friend to the interest of pure and undefiled religion

religion, as it is delivered in the gospel of Jesus.

You, my lords, are all hastening, and some of you very near, to the invisible and eternal state. It must sometimes, surely, affect your minds in the hours of calm meditation, that you are to appear (stripped of every present flattering distinction) before Jesus Christ, the supreme Pastor and King of the Church, in a character more peculiar, I might say more responsible, than that of other men. Can it be forgotten, that such extensive powers,—such distinguished privileges in this life,—must be strictly accounted for in the next?

That your lordships may have the unspeakable satisfaction in life, the consolation at death, and the glory in a future state, of having exerted, with all the resolution and zeal of Christian Bishops, the great powers of which you are possessed:—that, when your lordships shall soon stand (as it must, my lords, be very soon) before the supreme Pastor, to render an account of your high station in his Church, it may appear, to your everlasting honour, that you were ready not to risk only, but even to sacrifice every worldly interest, in order to rescue the Christian name from the reproach you saw it suffer, prays with great sincerity,

My Lords,

Your Lordships

Most obedient, &c.

A CHRISTIAN.

POST-

P O S T S C R I P T.

DR. Stebbing, in his late Instructions of a Parish-Minister, Part II. owns,—That the doctrine of sacerdotal absolution has no foundation in Scripture: “That some of the methods, practised in the primitive Church, with regard to restoring penitents, had very much the air of a farce; That, for the first thousand years, the forms of absolution ran all in the form of a prayer, and not in the form of a preremptory definitive sentence, as it now stands in the popish forms, and in one of our own forms from them (the Visitation of the Sick.) The popish form of ordination also,” the learned Doctor observes, “is retained in the Church of England. These two forms are relative to each other, and cannot stand separately; for, the one conveys the power which the other exerciseth, and they are novelties alike, and it is very much to be wished that they were both properly altered. Dissenters would find less matter for censure, and Infidels for profane raillery.”

“The late Bishop Bull, (he says,) who was one of the ablest scholars, the staunchest Churchmen, and the best Christians of his time, when he was upon his death-bed, refused to have this form read; and ordered the minister that attended him to use that form which stands in the Office, for the holy Communion in its stead.”

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The worthy Doctor “freely blames those who grasp at the shadow of an authority which, in truth and substance, we must all renounce. What else do we when we pretend to absolve conscience? We may use a hundred distinctions if we please; we may say that the absolution is not authoritative, but declaratory; or, that it is not judicial, but ministerial: but, if you would speak to be understood, you must say, that, with respect to any real internal effect, it is NOTHING: and you will speak truth too; for, all the rest, if you will preserve to God his prerogative to forgive sin, are words without meaning.” Vide pages 37, 38, 39, 51, 52.

Yet at this shadow every clergyman in England presumptuously grasps. He publicly claims, and, when called upon, presumes to exercise this power of forgiving sins, which is the prerogative of Almighty God alone.

But, if the absolution, as to any real effect, be acknowledged by our own learned doctors to be NOTHING, what must be the public claim and the exercise of it? What it is I forbear to say. The enemies of Christianity will, with insulting pleasure tell.

I shall only add, that there is one remarkable instance in which this sacerdotal absolution has been given, under such circumstances as rendered it peculiarly indefensible.

When Charles II. came to the close of his profligate life, three bishops attended him; who, severally, by very free and serious admonitions, endeavoured to alarm his conscience, and to rouse him to some sober and penitential reflections. The king gave them the hearing, but answered not a word. He was six or seven times pressed to receive the sacrament, and a table, with the elements, was brought into the room, but the king refused. Bishop Ken then asked him *if he desired ABSOLUTION OF HIS SINS*. Which the king not declining, behold! in this unimpressed, impenitent, state of mind, the bishop pronounced it over him; and, in the name of the sacred Trinity, and as by au-

from Almighty God, GAVE HIM THE FULL FORGIVENESS OF ALL HIS SINS. Bishop Burnet, in the History of his own Times, 8vo edit. Vol. II.* says, " Bishop Ken was very much blamed for
 " pronouncing absolution over the king, as he
 " expressed no sense of sorrow for his past life, nor
 " any purpose of amendment. It was thought to
 " be a prostitution of the peace of the Church to
 " give it to one who, after a life led as the king's
 " had been, seemed to harden himself against
 " every thing that could be said to him,—and soon
 " after died, recommending his mistress and illegitimate children to the care of his brother, but
 " said not a word of his queen, nor of his people,
 " nor of his servants, nor of the payment of his
 " debts, nor a word of religion."

* Page 312.

APPENDIX.

A P P E N D I X.

Number I.

THE Restoration of Charles II. and the Act of Uniformity, which was passed soon after it, are two of the most important parts of the English history. By these events, the character and the state of the Dissenters were greatly affected: but it is a part of our history which is either little understood or much misrepresented, especially in many of the sermons which are annually preached on the thirtieth of January. Since, therefore, this unrighteous Act of Uniformity, which silenced and ejected two thousand of our brave and virtuous clergy, is the foundation on which the present Church of England is built, and the cause of our separation from it; we beg leave to represent to the impartial public some of the disgraceful circumstances which attended that event; circumstances, which will shew the baseness, ingratitude, and iniquity, of those transactions; which ought to be transmitted as a proper warning and instruction to indignant posterity.

To this purpose we observe, in the first place, that the Puritan, or Presbyterian clergy, were the only body of men, in the whole kingdom, who had the courage to oppose and to protest openly against the trial and condemnation of Charles I.

With great danger to themselves they presented a bold remonstrance to the General and Council of war, the then-ruling powers, warning them in the name of God, and conjuring them in the most solemn manner, to desist from their violent proceedings against the king. This long and spirited protest was signed by above fifty of the principal Presbyterian ministers in and about London, and presented Jan. 18, 1648—9.* “The Presbyterian-
 “ans, and body of the city, (says Bishop Burnet,) were much against it, and were every where
 “fasting and praying for the king’s preservation.”† Archdeacon Echard says, “Crom-
 “well first pulled down the Presbyterians, and then destroyed the king,—and that almost all
 “the Presbyterian ministers in London, and very many in the several counties, and a few of the
 “Independents themselves, declared against the design, in their sermons, in conferences in moni-
 “tory letters, petitions, protestations, and public re-
 “monstrances: they earnestly begged, that, contra-
 “ry to so many oaths and imprecations, contrary to
 “public and private faith, &c. they would not
 “defile their own hands and the kingdom with
 “royal blood.”‡ Abundant proof of the same might be brought from Clarendon, Rapin, &c. We proceed to observe,

Secondly, That the Presbyterians had the principal hand, and were the chief agents, in restoring King Charles II. to the throne. This appears, beyond doubt, from the united testimony of the history of those times.

When Charles II. came to Scotland, Lord Clarendon says, expecting force from that kingdom to restore him “to his father’s throne, and the
 “parliament of England, resolved to send an army
 “against him, *all* the Presbyterian party greatly
 “opposed it:—they were bold in contradicting

* See the whole Protest Neal’s Hist. Purit. Vol. III. page 532.

† Burnet’s History of his Times, Vol. II. page 31.

‡ Echard’s History of England, pages 654, 708.

“Cromwell

“ Cromwell in the house, and crossing all his designs in the city.*

The first solemn conference which was had with General Monk, to induce him to restore the king, was “ at Northumberland-house, with the earl of that name, the Earl of Manchester, Hollis, Sir William Waller, Lewis, and other eminent persons, who were looked upon as the heads and governors of the moderate Presbyterian party. In this conference, the king’s restoration was proposed, in direct terms, as absolutely necessary :—the London (Presbyterian) ministers talked loudly” in the same strain, “ without exposing themselves to the danger of naming the king, which yet they did not long forbear : every body understood they thought it necessary the people should return to their allegiance.”†

“ Monk, (says Rapin,‡) knowing how the Presbyterians stood affected, employed, his confident (probably Clarges) to make a secret agreement with some of their chiefs for the restoring of the king, Charles II. by their means.”—Monk comes with his army to London; and, having restored the secluded members to their seats in the house, thereby made it properly a Presbyterian parliament. “ It continued sitting but twenty-five days; in which time several steps were made which clearly discovered that they were by no means disinclined to the king. For, 1. They ordered a general discharge of all the imprisoned friends of the king. 2. They repealed the oath for the abjuration of Charles Stuart and all the royal family. 3. They voted Monk to be general of the armies of the three nations. 4. They voted down the old, and appointed a new, council of state. 5. They made great changes in the militia, and took away all commissions from the repub-

* Hist. of the Rebellion, Vol. VI. page 374. 475.

† Ibid. Vol. VI. page 733, 734.

‡ Rapin’s Hist. Eng. Vol XIII. page 199, 200.

“licans. 6. They abrogated the oath requiring
 “to be faithful to the established government
 “without a king and house of peers. Lastly,
 “They dissolved themselves, issuing out writs for
 “a new parliament to meet the 25th of April.
 “In this free parliament, the Presbyterians, who
 “were much superior in number, did not think
 “proper to exclude the royalists, with whom
 “they were in perfect agreement for restoring
 “the king. This parliament was an assembly in
 “which the Presbyterians had certainly a supe-
 “riority of voices; consequently a Presbyterian
 “parliament restored the king to the throne of his
 “ancestors.”*

Bishop Burnet says, “these five following per-
 “sons, all Presbyterians, had the chief hand in
 “the restoration: Sir Ant. Ashley Cooper, after-
 “wards Earl of Shaftesbury; Sir Arthur
 “Annesly, afterwards Earl of Anglesey; Denzil
 “Hollis, created Lord Hollis; the Earl of Man-
 “chester, and Lord Roberts.”†

“The Presbyterians and the Royalists, (says
 “Hume,) being united, formed the voice of the
 “nation, which called for the king’s restoration.
 “The king was almost entirely in the hands of
 “of the former party, (the Presbyterians:) some
 “zealous leaders amongst them began to renew
 “the demand of conditions, but the general opi-
 “nion seemed to condemn these jealous capitula-
 “tions with their sovereign. The leaders of the
 “Presbyterians, the Earl of Manchester, Lord
 “Fairfax, Lord Roberts, Hollis, Sir Ant. Ashley
 “Cooper, Annesley, Lewis, were determined to
 “atone for past transgressions.” Again, “The
 “king’s negligent ingratitude to the unfortunate
 “Cavaliers admits of some excuse, as he had been
 “restored more by the efforts of his reconciled
 “enemies

* Rapin’s Hist. of Eng. Vol. XIII. page 227, 241, 242.

† History of his Times, Vol. II. page 242, marginal
 note.

“ enemies (the Presbyterians) than of his antient friends.”*

Thirdly, The Presbyterians, (whom the king, with too much truth perhaps, used to call *God's silly people*,) trusting to his declaration from Breda, solemnly promising “ liberty to tender consciences, “ and that no man should be disquieted for differences of opinion in matters of religion, which “ did not disturb the peace of the kingdom;” and, relying upon the fair speeches and assurances of his friends, and some of them perhaps duped by the low cunning of the king, who (a committee of their ministers being sent to him at Breda) ordered them to be in waiting whilst he hypocritically withdrew to perform his private devotions, in which his heart was so enlarged, that his voice was distinctly heard, as he intended it should be, by the ministers in the anti-chamber, devoutly *thanking God that he was a covenanted king*, (alluding to the solemn league and covenant, to which he had bound himself by the most sacred of oaths,) *and that he hoped the Lord would give him a humble, meek, and forgiving, spirit* :—whether the Presbyterians were deluded by the fair promises of the king and his treacherous friends, or were pressed by the civil discord which at that time subsisted, and alarmed at the dreadful disorders into which they apprehended the nation was again running,—be this as it may, they were so infatuated as to trust to the honour of Charles II. and, without previously settling any conditions, they were highly instrumental in restoring him to the throne;—their folly was only equalled by the base ingratitude with which he requited them.

Fourthly, Two years had scarcely elapsed before, by all the artifices of court-management, by the influence and zeal of tyrannical and bigoted prelates, by lying and sham plots, and pretended conspiracies, the Act of Uniformity was, by a small majority, passed into a law, “ by which

† Hume's Hist. of Great Britain, Vol. II. page 113, 158.

“ two

“ two thousand of our ministers” (the very men who had so successfully helped forward his restoration) “ were cast out of their livings, and exposed, with their distressed families, to innumerable sufferings. To speak any thing derogatory of the Common Prayer was punished, for the first offence with a whole year’s imprisonment, without bail or mainprize; and the second offence with imprisonment for life: the meeting for religious worship, in any separate assemblies, was punishable with severe fines, with imprisonment, and banishment.” The jails were soon filled with the unhappy restorers of this ungrateful king; their houses were pillaged; their families reduced to beggary and want. An estimate was published, of near eight thousand Protestant Dissenters who perished in prison by their sufferings on a religious account, in the reign of this perjured, perfidious, prince; and, by the severe penalties inflicted on them, for no other crime but that of assembling to worship God, they suffered in their trades and estates, in the compass of a few years, at least, it is said, two millions.*

This was the king who had himself three several times taken the Scots Covenant, declared solemnly his detestation of Popery and Prelacy, vowed never to tolerate them in any part of his dominions, and, in the most solemn manner, swore, *by the eternal and almighty God, who liveth and reigneth for ever*, that he would not only enjoin the Covenant, but fully establish Presbyterian government, and their directory for worship, and observe them in his own practice and family, and never oppose them, nor endeavour any change.†

“ By

* Critic. Hist. of England, page 411, and Neal’s Hist. Purit. Vol. IV. page 544.

† King Charles II. swore at Breda, to the commissioners from Scotland, in 1649, that he approved of the solemn league and covenant, and that he would establish Presbyterian church government, the directory of worship, confession of faith, and Catechisms of the kingdom of Scotland;

“ By the Act of Uniformity (says Mr. Locke on
 “ this subject) all the clergy of England, are obli-
 “ ged to subscribe and declare the corporation-
 “ oath, viz. *That it is not lawful, upon any pre-
 “ tence whatsoever, to take arms against the
 “ king.*” A position most dangerous as well as
 false, absolutely subversive of our present happy
 constitution, and which themselves, in the suc-
 ceeding reign, openly disavowed, and acted in
 direct opposition to it.) “ This they readily com-
 “ plied with: for, you must know, that sort of
 “ men are taught rather to obey than understand.
 “ And yet, that Bartholomew-day, was fatal to
 “ our Church and religion, by throwing out a
 “ very great number of worthy, learned, pious,
 “ and orthodox, divines, who could not come up
 “ to this oath and other things in that act. And
 “ so great was the zeal in carrying on this Church
 “ affair, and so blind the obedience required,
 “ that, if you compute the time of passing the
 “ act with that allowed for the clergy to subscribe
 “ the book of Common Prayer, thereby establish-
 “ ed, you will find it could not be printed and
 “ distributed so as that one man in forty could

land; and that he would observe these in his own practice
 and family. At Edinburgh, in 1650, he also swore to ob-
 serve the same terms as at Breda; and at Dumferling, the
 same year, he published a solemn declaration, that he had
 sworn and subscribed the national covenant of the kingdom
 of Scotland, and the solemn league and covenant of the
 three kingdoms of Scotland, England, and Ireland; and
 that he detested and abhorred all Popery, superstition, and
 idolatry, together with prelacy and all errors, heresy,
 schism, and profaneness; and that he resolved not to tole-
 rate, much less allow, any of these in any part of his do-
 minions. Such were the oaths and declarations made by
 Charles at Breda and in Scotland; but the terms, which
 the friends of freedom wished to have imposed on him in
 England at the restoration in 1660, were such as would
 have given general security to his subjects for the enjoy-
 ment of their civil and religious rights.

have

“ have seen and read the book they did so perfectly *assent and consent* to.”*

To conclude. The instruction we are to learn hence is, to say, with Lord Strafford, (whose faithful and long services his sovereign* rewarded with, in effect, signing a death-warrant to cut off his head,) *Put not your trust in princes, nor in the sons of men; for in them there is no help!* But we thank God, there is a SON OF MAN whom he hath constituted *Prince over all the kings of the earth*, (Rev. i. 5.) in whose supremacy we triumph, in whom, with firm confidence and security, we trust: we glory in being his subjects, and rejoice in the assurance that his kingdom of righteousness, of liberty, and truth, shall finally prevail; and that every loss we sustain, and every temporal emolument and advantage we forego, out of conscience towards God, and from allegiance to him, the only King in his Church, will be abundantly rewarded in that glorious everlasting kingdom which, according to his promise, we know will shortly take place!

In the mean time, we are content, if the will of God be so, to be cast out and reproached, and to suffer great worldly discouragements, (which, in all ages, hath been the lot of some of the wisest, and worthiest, and best, men upon earth,) in the assured expectation that *there are times of refreshing coming from the presence*,† or appearing, *of this great King of the Church*, when every man will rise into glory and honour, or sink into shame and everlasting contempt, according to the fidelity or negligence of his present conduct, and that all shall be recompensed *according to their present works*.

Amen! Even so come, Lord Jesus!

* Critic. History of England, Vol. II. page 350. Maiz-Collection, page 61.

* Charles I.

† Acts iii. 19.

[*N. B.* The above account hath been given chiefly with a view to shew the great ingratitude and treachery of Charles II. and to set in its true light an historical fact, which seems to be forgotten in the reproaches occasionally thrown out against the Dissenters as enemies to monarchical government; for, otherwise, it reflects no little dishonour on the Presbyterians, that they should have been so active in bringing about the restoration without stipulating some conditions for the future security both of civil and religious liberty. — Conditions, indeed, were intended, and a motion was made, in the House of Commons, for that purpose, by Mr. Hale, afterwards the famous chief justice. Lord Broghill, in a letter to Thurloe, dated May 8, 1663, says, “ I heartily beg of “ the Lord that our steps may be as safe as they “ are expeditious, and that we may ascertain “ those just rights, by an agreement, which we “ contended for so successfully in the war.”*]

But the fact was, that making any stipulations with the king was prevented by the falsehood, dissimulation, and treachery, of General Monk; and the Presbyterians, with the rest of the nation, were also deluded by the king's promises, and admitted him to the throne without making any proper provisions for their own security. They had, afterwards, abundant reason to repent of their weakness and credulity; and the Presbyterians received the most injurious treatment, and experienced the utmost baseness and ingratitude, from a prince whom they had been highly instrumental in raising from a state of indigence and banishment to all the splendors of a throne!]

* Harris's Life of Charles II. Vol. I. page 337.

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A P P E N D I X.

Number II.

C A S E

Respecting a Clergyman's refusing to
administer the Sacrament to an
open and notorious Evil-liver,
with the several Opinions of

Mr. Serjeant HILL,
Mr. MADOCKS, and
Mr. HARGRAVE.

C A S E.

A Man accepts an office, and, by law, he
ought, within three months after accept-
ing the same, to receive the sacrament of the
Lord's Supper, in some parish-church, according
to the usage of the Church of England. He gives
timely notice of his intention to receive the sacra-
ment to the clergyman of the parish to which he
belongs, agreeably to the rubric, and he attends,
C c with

with others of the congregation on the proper Sunday, for the purpose of receiving the sacrament as a qualification for holding his office; but the clergyman, knowing him to have long been, and still to be, an open and notorious evil-liver, refuses, for that reason only, to administer the sacrament to him; and, by reason of such refusal, he incurs the disabilities and penalties enacted by the Stat. of the 25th year of Car. II. c. 2. commonly called the Test-act, for exercising his office contrary to the said statute.

Q. Can the man maintain an action against the clergyman for refusing, under these circumstances, to admit him to receive the sacrament, and are there any adjudged cases on the point?

The opinion of Mr. Serjeant HILL, on the foregoing Case.

I THINK an action is maintainable by the person who accepted the office against the clergyman, for refusing, under the above circumstances, to admit him to receive the sacrament; for, though I know of no case adjudged in point, yet there are several adjudged on a principle applicable to this case, viz. that the two only requisites, in any action on the case, are *damnum & injuria*, both of which, I think, concur in this case. As to the first, it is in itself apparent, and therefore there can be no question about any thing but the other; that is, whether the refusal was injurious or unlawful, and I think it was; because, every parishioner has a right to partake of the sacrament when generally administered in his own parish, if there be not just cause of refusing him, which I think there is not in this case. The cause pretended is the first of the two in the rubric. Now, that in the rubric is thus expressed, viz. that the party applying is "an open and notorious evil-liver, or has done some wrong to his neighbour," by

“ by word or deed, so that the congregation be
 “ thereby offended.” The whole description,
 and more particularly the conclusion, is loose,
 and scarcely possible to be proved. In the present
 case it is stated, that the only reason of the refusal
 is, that the parishioner is an open and notorious
 evil liver, which is but part of the description of
 this cause of refusal, and therefore can be no jus-
 tification, even if it would were it the whole,
 which I should think doubtful, as the Test-act re-
 quires all, who have any of the offices therein de-
 scribed, without exception, to receive the sacra-
 ment; and, being later than the act establishing
 the rubric, it seems, in that particular, to be a
 virtual repeal of it, and an action on the case will
 lie against an ecclesiastical person either for a
 misfeasance or a nonfeasance in his office, notwith-
 standing the matter be spiritual, where a temporal
 damage is the consequence of it. Dr. & Stud.
 lib. 2. c. 32. 12 Coke 128. 2 Bulstr. 266. In Si-
 derfin, 34 an action was brought for refusing to
 administer the sacrament: and, though no tempo-
 ral damage was laid, yet the Court declined giv-
 ing judgement on the point, and determined the
 case merely on a fault in the pleadings; but in
 1 Keb. 947. it is said to have been agreed by the
 Court, that an action on the case will lie for re-
 fusing the sacrament to one who was bound to re-
 ceive it under a penalty. That is a book of very
 little authority, otherwise this is an opinion,
 though not a judgement, nearly in point; for, it is
 asserted without any exception, and I think it
 right. Watson, in page 315, 316, of the fol. edit.
 of The complete Incumbent, is of a contrary opi-
 nion; but I pay no regard to that opinion, being
 delivered with warmth; and the authorities re-
 ferred to, and the reason given for the opinion,
 make against it. The authorities are the two last
 I have taken notice of; and his reason, that then
 those who live in schism, and join separate congre-
 gations, might be admitted, must, I think, have
 been inserted whilst the law against occasional

conformity subsisted, and, by an oversight, continued in the later editions after it was repealed; for, the repeal of that law, shews the sense of the legislature, that occasional conformists are not to be refused. However, there being no case adjudged in point, it is not possible to be certain what the determination might be, if the point be brought to a decision: but I am surpris'd the parishioner will not receive it in some other Church, as by the act he is not confined to his own parish-church, and there are many other parishes where it is well known he might receive it without objection.

Lincoln's-Inn,
March 24, 1787.

G. HILL.

*The Opinion of Mr. MADOCKS on the foregoing
Case.*

BY the 1 Ed. VI. c. 1. the minister shall not, without lawful cause, deny the sacrament to any person that will devoutly and humbly desire it. This act, which was repealed in Queen Mary's time, was revived by 1 Eliz. c. 1. The only cases on the point are Clovel versus Cardinall, 12 Charles II. in 1 Syderfin, page 34. An action on the case was brought against the defendant, a parson in Essex, for refusing to administer the sacrament on two Sundays, and the declaration concluded, against the form of the statute. A verdict was found for the plaintiff, and entire damages. The Court arrested the judgement, because the declaration had not alleged, that, on the second Sunday, the plaintiff requested the defendant to give it him, and the damages went to both counts. But, at the end of the case, are these words, " But
" the Court did not deliver any opinion whether
" the

“ the action lay.” The only other case is 1 Keble, 947. Sir And. Henley versus D. Burstow. The case relates to a different matter; but it is there said, That Maynard, for the plaintiff, laid an action upon the case lies against the defendant for refusing the sacrament, which the Court agreed to, on 1 Eliz. because the party is bound to receive on penalty. This reason is a bad one; for, there is no such penalty in the 1st Eliz. The penalty is for not going to Church, not for neglecting to receive the sacrament. Lord Chief Baron Comyns, in his Abridgement, referring to the case in Syderfin, says, “ It seems that an action does not lie.” Suppose an action would lie, it comes to be a question, whether, in this case, there was *lawful cause* of refusal within the statute of Edward VI. The rubric, which, in strange, 1062, is held to bind the laity, says, That if any be an open and notorious evil-liver, the curate shall call him, and advertise him that he do not presume to come to the Lord’s table until he has openly declared himself to have repented: and the same order the curate shall use with those betwixt whom he perceiveth malice and hatred to reign, not suffering them to be partakers of the Lord’s table till he knoweth them to be reconciled. The rubric does not say expressly that the curate may refuse in the case of an evil-liver, but, as it goes on, it says, The same order the curate shall use in case of malice, and shall not suffer them to partake. It seems to me he may refuse in both cases. Under these circumstances, I think it a nice question whether an action will lie. I should be inclined to think it would, as, by statutes made since the case of Clovell versus Cardinall, persons appointed to offices are liable to penalties for not receiving the sacrament. If an action should be brought, he must plead a justification, which it will be incumbent upon him to prove, which will leave the question open in arrest of judgement, whether the

action will lie in case a verdict is against him, or whether the declaration be good.

Lincoln's-Inn,
March 24, 1787.

JOHN MADOCKS.

*The Opinion of Mr. HARGRAVE on the foregoing
Case.*

THAT there are reasons which will justify a clergyman in denying the sacrament to a person soliciting is recognized by the statute of the 1st of Edward VI. c. 1. which enjoins the minister not to deny *without a lawful cause*: according also to the rubric before the Communion-service, in the book of Common Prayer, which is sanctioned by act of parliament, being an open and notorious evil-liver is a reason for the clergyman's cautioning the party against presuming to come to the communion-table without open declaration of repentance. I therefore incline to think, that, in the case supposed, the clergyman acted legally in refusing the sacrament; yet it appears to me to be very perilous in the parson of the Church, or his curate, to deny the sacrament on the ground stated in this case; because, if questioned, the minister, so denying, may be at least liable to ecclesiastical censure from the want of proof of the facts on which he founds the refusal. Whether, having denied to administer the sacrament, without being able to prove a just cause, more especially where the person refused holds an office, in respect of which taking the sacrament is essential to prevent the penalties of the Test-act, will bear an action, is, in my opinion, a question of considerable doubt and difficulty; nor do I at present know any case in which such a point has received a judicial decision. The only printed cases, in which I observe
a point

a point of this kind to have arisen, are *Clovell* against *Cardinall*, 1 Siderf. 34. and *Henley* against *Burftow*, in 1 Kebl. 947. In the former case, a decision of the point became unnecessary. In the latter, there is the assertion of Serjeant Maynard, arguing, as counsel, that an action on the case will lie where the party refused is liable to a penalty for not receiving the sacrament, and the Court is said to have agreed to this: but the reporter is of little authority, and the opinion is apparently extra-judicial.

Boswell-court,
March 26, 1787.

FRANCIS HARGRAVE.

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S U P P L E M E N T.

IT hath been frequently asserted, by the advocates for conformity to the Church of England, and it is, we believe, the opinion of many, if not the greater part, of the Clergy, that the unfeigned assent and consent, which the Act of Uniformity requires, to all and every thing contained in the Book of Common-Prayer and Administration of Sacraments, &c. relates to the *use* of the things prescribed, and not to the *inward* and *entire* approbation of whatever is enjoined and included in that book. The contrary might justly be argued from the general language of the Act, and especially from the word *unfeigned*, which cannot well be applied to any other than the real conviction of the mind. But not to insist upon this point, it will be evident from the following account, taken from the Lords and Commons Journals, what was the sense of the legislature on the subject.

In the year 1663, a bill was brought into the House of Commons, and passed there, entitled, "An act for relief of such persons as, by sickness or other impediment, were disabled from subscribing the declaration in the act of uniformity, and explanation of part of the said act." This bill was carried up to the House of Peers on the 18th of July, and was read the first and second time on the 24th of that month; after which it was referred to a committee of twenty-six lords.
The

The committee made their report the next day, and, besides some alterations and amendments of little importance, proposed, to the consideration of the House, a clause to be added as follows:

“ And be it enacted and declared, by the authority aforesaid, that the declaration and subscription of assent and consent in the said act mentioned, shall be understood only as to the practice and obedience to the said act, and not otherwise.”

When the question was put, “ whether to agree with the committee in this clause,” it was resolved in the affirmative; fourteen lords entering their protest against it, as destructive to the Church of England. These were the Duke of York, the Earls of Derby, Dorset, Bridgewater, Northampton, Peterborough, and Berkshire, the Lord Viscount Mordaunt, and the Lords Gerard-Bromley, Maynard, Colepeper, Lucas, Berkley of Stratton, and Cornwallis.

But, when the bill was sent back from the Lords to the Commons, on the 26th of July, the additional clause met with a different fate. The question being put, to agree with the Lords in its being made part of the bill, the House was divided, and the question was carried in the negative, by a majority of forty-two to thirty. At the same time, it was resolved, that a conference should be desired with the Lords, upon the amendments to the bill. The conference was held on the day following; and one of the managers on the part of the Commons, speaking on the additional clause, declared, that what had been sent down from the upper house, touching the bill, had neither justice nor prudence in it. This gave offence to the Lords, and occasioned an order, that, at the next session, the House would take into serious consideration, before they entered upon any other matter whatsoever, how to provide for the future, that their privileges might not be infringed or broken. Nevertheless, after some debate concerning the matter

ter of the conference, two questions were proposed ; 1st, Whether they should proceed any farther in the bill ; and 2dly, Whether they should agree with the House of Commons ; and, the question being put, Whether the first question should be first put ? it was resolved in the negative. Then the question was put, “ Whether to agree with the “ House of Commons, according to their last conference : ” which was resolved in the affirmative. On the same day, being the 27th of July, 1663, the bill received the royal assent.

Thus it appears to have been the sense of the legislature, upon a very distinct and particular consideration of the matter, that the unfeigned assent and consent, required by the Act of Uniformity, relates not to the *use* only, but to the *inward* and *entire* approbation, of whatever is contained and prescribed in the Book of Common Prayer. Lords Journals, Vol. xi. p. 564, 570, 572, 573, 574, 577, 579. Commons Journals, Vol. viii. p. 526, 533, 534.

THE END.

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